

DIAMOND~DICK

BOYS BEST

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DIAMOND DICK'S DARING DEEDS.

By the author of "DIAMOND DICK."

CHAPTER VII.

DIAMOND DICK'S NIGHT SHIFT.

Young Diamond Dick stood in the door of the boarding house at the Comet Mine when Tim McBride, a deputy sheriff from Phoenix, came galloping up, a small arsenal strapped about his waist and a wild, baffled look in his eyes.

Handsome Harry, the old Serpent of Siskiyou, but lately installed in the office of marshal of Comet City, rode at the deputy's side.

"Hillo, son!" sung out Harry, as horses were pulled to a halt.

"Howdy, Bertie," added McBride.

"Good-afternoon, gentlemen," returned Bertie. "Something's in the wind, sure as fate, or you two wouldn't be coming together at that breakneck speed."

"Right ye are, son," answered Harry. "McBride stopped in Comet to ask me a few questions, and, as I couldn't give him any satisfaction, he opined he'd come up ter tork with either yerself or Dick."

"Diamond Dick is over in the office," returned Bertie.

"He's busy, though, just now—a delegation from the night shift went in to see him about something or other."

"We won't bother Diamond Dick," put in McBride; "you'll do just as well, Bertie. Have you seen anythin' of a maniac around these diggin's?"

"Maniac?"

"Yes—a big, husky chap, with long hair and a full beard—hair and beard both black. He's dressed in rags principally, but he's well armed and seems to have plenty of ammunition."

"Is he violently insane?"

"I should say so! He killed a man over at Tonto Basin and wounded another so that he's not expected to live. Up in Big Bug he shot a cattleman down in cold blood, and the cowboys organized a man hunt with the result that another puncher was killed and the crazy man got away after all. Over at the Telluride Mine he slaughtered three Mexicans and got away without a

scratch. He's described by those who've seen him as a regular demon, and we have it pretty straight that he's loose in this vicinity."

"We haven't seen him around here," said Bertie, "and I don't know as we care to, if that's the kind of a man he is."

"He seems to have dropped out of sight for the last day or two," went on McBride, "and we haven't had a report of a single killing. He'll break out before long, I suppose, and start another trail of blood."

"Who is he, and where did he come from?"

"His name is Skidmore, Emory Skidmore. He's an old prospector and thought he had found a bonanza mine over in the Harqua Hala district. The supposed bonanza, though, turned out to be a hole in the ground, and poor Skid went off the jump. He imagines now that he's got a fabulous property, and that every one he meets is trying to take it away from him. The country is terrorized, and there isn't a freighter out of Phoenix that doesn't travel heeled like this," and McBride struck one hand against his well-filled belt.

"We'll keep an eye out for him," said Bertie, "and, if he presents himself, will try and capture him."

"If you attempt to corral him be sure you take enough men." McBride gathered up his lines. "And warn everybody you see."

"Better stay here and have some supper, Mac," continued Bertie. "The boys have just got through——"

"No, thanks. I'm going on to Montezuma and the Lucky Strike—they've both got to be warned."

With a parting wave of the hand, the deputy whirled his horse and went on up the gulch at the same wild speed.

Just as he disappeared from sight, Two-Spot Peters put in an appearance from the direction of the office.

"Hello, Red-Top!" sung out the boy. "How's everything in the town?"

"Tame as a Sunday-school picnic, kid. Nothin' doin'."

"Well, there's somethin' doin' up here all right, all right."

"What is it?" queried Bertie, seeing at once that Two-Spot was holding something back.

"Diamond Dick is gettin' a night shift together for a still hunt underground. I've joined, and so has Fritz. The boss saw you fellows down here and asked me to come down and have you hot-foot it for the office."

"This looks like bizness!" exclaimed Harry, with considerable satisfaction, dismounting from his horse. "Hyer, Two-Spot! Run this animile over ter the corral, will ye? I'll go ter the office with Bertie."

"Cert," answered the boy, taking the horse by the bridle and leading it away.

Bertie and Harry proceeded at once in the direction of the office.

There were at least a score of miners standing around the building, talking excitedly in groups.

They belonged to the night shift and carried their drills and hammers.

It was considerably after the time when they should have been below the surface, and the young sport and his old pard wondered what the delay and the excitement portended.

Inside the office Diamond Dick sat with his chair tilted back against the wall, his feet thrown up on the desk in front of him, a cigar between his teeth and a half smile about his lips.

Higgins and O'Neill, two foremen on the night shift, stood in front of him, their pockets full of candles and coils of fuse and sticks of giant powder in their hands.

The foremen were evidently very much worried about something.

"Hello, old pard!" exclaimed Diamond Dick, nodding to Harry. "Glad you came up from Comet City at just this particular time. If you want to, you can take part in a little excitement."

"Ef I want ter!" exclaimed Harry. "Gle-ory ter snakes, Dick, did ye ever know a time when the ole

Sarpint wasn't dead set on insertin' himself inter a diffikilty?"

"I don't know that I ever did, Harry," laughed Dick, "and this is about as peculiar a difficulty as you ever tangled up with. O'Neill and Higgins say there are spooks in the Comet!"

"Spooks?" echoed Bertie and Harry.

"Thet's it," spoke up Higgins; "the kind of spooks thet blaze away at ye when ye're least expectin' it. Last night thar wasn't one o' the boys on the shift thet wasn't shot at an' some o' the bullets come too blame clost fer comfort, too."

"Spooks don't use guns," said Bertie.

"This 'un does."

"That proves the marksman isn't a spook, but flesh an' blood, like the rest of us."

"Flesh an' blood couldn't git away from us like this gun fanner did," put in O'Neill. "We chased the thing at least a dozen times, an' it faded right inter nothin' every time. Once I got clost enough ter make a grab, but my hands went right through the thing an' never touched nothin'."

"Jumpin' sandhills!" exclaimed Harry. "Thar ain't no snaffle on yore fancy, O'Neill."

"D'ye think I imagined it?" demanded O'Neill, indignantly.

"I don't think nothin' about it—I know it. A spook 'u'd be frin' spook bullets an' I'd jest as soon stand up an' take a broadside o' them kind o' missles."

"Them bullets was the real thing," said Higgins. "They'd whistle through the air, an' plunk inter the wall an' send pieces o' rock flyin'. One of 'em took a button off my coat an' cut a lock o' hair from O'Neill's head."

"Then settle it in yore minds thet thar's some feller loose in the Comet thet's got no business thar."

"But why should sech a feller as thet be blazin' away at us? What hev we done ter him?"

"That's the mysterious part of it," said Dick, "but I guess we can chase the mystery down and settle it with-

out much trouble. I don't want the regular night shift to go down in the Comet and run the risk of their lives, O'Neill, so you and Higgins can keep your gangs out while I organize a night shift of my own and make a still hunt for this disturber."

"Some of us had jest as soon jine yer night shift, Mr. Wade," remarked Higgins.

"I'd rather you wouldn't. Take a lay-off and leave the work to myself, Bertie, Harry and the boys. We'll have the mine to ourselves then, and you and your men will be paid just the same as though you had gone on."

"Didn't the day shift see anything of this mysterious person?" asked Bertie.

"Not a sign," replied Dick.

"We hesitated a long time before we spoke about it," observed O'Neill, "but some of the men felt a little skeery about goin' down an' so we thort we'd better speak ter the boss."

"Did you get a good look at the fellow?" queried Dick.

"I did," answered Higgins.

"What does he look like?"

"Looks like a rag baby. He ain't got no hat, an' he has long hair an' a bushy black beard. He don't say nothin', but when he laughs— Gosh! it's a reg'lar graveyard laugh thet feller has got."

"Thunder!" cried Harry, giving a sudden start as a thought came to him.

"I'll bet you're thinking of the same thing I am, Harry," spoke up Bertie. "Did you just have an idea that the man in the mine might be Skidmore?"

"Thet's who it is, I'll bet a poncho!"

"What about Skidmore?" asked Dick.

Bertie thereupon repeated the story which Tim McBride had given them.

The old veteran became thoughtful at once.

"The crazy man might have dodged into the mine," he muttered, reflectively; "there are two or three places where he could have gone down on the ladders and never have been seen by any one. I rather incline to

your idea, Bertie, although we have an enemy who answers the general description of this man."

"Morgan?" returned the young sport.

Three gamblers—Kinglake, Morgan and Heffner, who had been ordered out of Comet City by Diamond Dick—had declared war against the Wades, father and son, and were supposed to be somewhere in the hills awaiting an opportunity to gain revenge for fancied wrongs.

Dick nodded.

"Yes, Morgan," he replied.

"But what could Morgan hope to accomplish in the mine?" queried Bertie.

"Well, for one thing, there is plenty of giant powder within reach. If a good big charge could be set off properly the mine might be wrecked."

Bertie was startled.

"Thunder!" growled Harry; "ef anythin' like that was done while the mine was full o' men——"

Harry did not finish, but a look of horror spread over every face in the room.

"That is just the contingency I fear," said Dick, calmly, "and that is the reason why I have ordered that regular night shift to stay out of the mine and propose to go down there with a night shift of my own."

"We'll be good marks fer the varmint, Dick," observed Harry, "with the electric lights all on."

"The lights will be turned off."

"Won't ye kerry any candles?"

"Yes, but candles that are not lighted. We all know every foot of the Comet underground as well as above, and we'll have to make a still hunt for this fellow, whoever he is, and get him corraled before he does any damage. The day shift didn't see the man. That may mean that he is hidden away somewhere preparing a blow-up of some kind. There will be considerable danger in joining this night shift of mine, and——"

"Nevertheless, Diamond Dick, I'd like to speak for a part in it. Can you accommodate me?"

A young fellow stepped into the room at that moment.

He was instantly greeted by the Diamond Dicks and Harry.

"Tom Fletcher, by all that's good!" exclaimed Bertie.

"Do you understand what this fracas is about, Tom?" inquired Dick.

"I got the gist of it from the men outside. I brought Chrissey up to see Ella Coleman, and when I heard that trouble was brewing, I sloped for the office direct. Can you take me on?"

Chrissey, or "Chris," as she was sometimes called, was Fletcher's sister, and Ella Coleman was the daughter of the mine super.

The girls were very good friends and were much together.

"Of course we'll take you on, Tom," answered Dick.

"What will the night shift do, Mr. Wade?" asked O'Neill. "They'd rather work than be idle, if thar's anythin' ye kin set 'em at. Ain't thar anythin' above ground we could turn our hands to?"

"Has Perkins got here with those ore wagons yet?"

"Not yet," returned Bertie.

"He's got two big wagons an' a team of twelve hosses," put in Harry. "Some of the hosses air ranch critters an' he was havin' trouble with 'em in Comet City an hour ago. He'll be along hyer purty soon, ef he ain't hyer now."

"Well," said Dick, "when Perkins gets here the night shift might help him load up with that sulphuret ore."

"All right, sir," answered O'Neill, and he and Higgins went away at once.

"Haulin' ore away from the Comet, Dick?" queried Harry.

"We struck a vein in the side of the gulch and ran in a tunnel on some good rock, but the ore is of the sulphuret variety, and I have arranged to send it to the Telluride mill, where they use an altogether different process. Perkins is going to freight it and——"

"Tiamont Tick!"

Fritz Dunder, the fat German youth, presented himself in the door.

In one hand he had a half-eaten pie, and he was obliged to splutter and make a prodigious swallow before he could articulate the words that called Dick's attention.

"What is it, Fritz?"

"Dere's a feller vants to see you airecty ofer on der drail."

"Can't he come here?"

"Dot vas imbossible. He say oof you vill come py him he vill be efer so mooch obliged."

Dick left his friends and at once went over to a point on the trail where a team and a mountain wagon were standing.

There were two men in the wagon and one of them was handcuffed.

It was the handcuffed man that claimed Dick's attention to the exclusion of everything else, just then, for he was none other than the gambler, Morgan!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RUNAWAY.

"Mr. Wade, I know," remarked the man in charge of the prisoner, reaching out his hand; "I recognize you from description, sir. Harlow Burton is my name, and I have chased this scoundrel here clear from old Cochise. I'm a deputy, you understand, and Morgan is wanted for murder."

As Dick grasped the deputy sheriff's hand he looked him over with considerable interest.

He was a hunchback, his head hardly reaching to the shoulder of the prisoner; his arms were of enormous length, his face was smooth-shaven, and his eyes steel-gray and piercing.

Between his knees stood a Winchester rifle, and on the seat at his right—the side farthest from Morgan—lay a navy six, ready to his hand in case of trouble.

Burton was very well known through that section under the sobriquet of "Old Lightning," and he had

earned a reputation of absolute fearlessness in the tracking down of criminals.

Dick and Burton had never met before, as may be supposed from Burton's remark, and it was interesting to note the swift way in which they sized each other up.

Dick's hand leaped out in a moment, and the ensuing clasp was cordial and hearty.

"Glad to know you, Burton."

"It does me proud to shake your fin, Wade."

"You have a friend of mine there, I see."

"I didn't know that. Have you and Morgan had dealings together?"

"He was training with Kinglake, and I ordered the pair out of Comet City. They went, but they came back again and openly defied me. I then had the Comet City marshal—who is none other than my old pard, Handsome Harry—put them in jail. They broke out, joined forces with a notorious cutthroat named Heffner, and have made me some trouble."

"Possibly you have a more valid claim on Morgan than I have?"

"Not if he killed a man up in your bailiwick. Where did you get him?"

"Up at Montezuma. He came in there for supplies, and I saw him in the street. I laid for him and got the drop, and he knew better than to make me shoot. So here he is. I want to put him up in the Comet jail for to-night—that is, if you've got a stronger cell than the one he and his pal got out of at the time you just spoke about."

"The lock-up has been repaired since then, and I'll guarantee it will hold your man. When you get to Comet inquire for Rickner. Harry is here at the mine for to-night, but Rickner holds the calaboose keys and will turn them over to you."

"Very good, I'll do it."

Burton gathered up the lines preparatory to starting, but stopped and listened.

Above the pounding of the stamps in the Comet gold

mill he heard a roar and a rattle, increasing swiftly in volume.

"What the blazes is that, Diamond Dick?" asked Burton.

"Now you've got me," replied Dick.

A moment later the source of the noise was explained.

Twelve horses, in wild flight, tore around the bend in the canyon, a few rods ahead.

Behind them rumbled and rattled two immense ore wagons, gibing fearfully to right and left and leaping high as their wheels came in contact with various rocks that strewed the trail.

There was no driver to be seen with the outfit.

"It's the ore haulers' rig!" exclaimed Dick. "Turn for your life, Burton, or you'll be run down! Push over toward the wall of the gulch—quick, man!"

The canyon at this point was about a hundred yards wide.

On the extreme right flowed the waters of Puma Creek; on the extreme left, close to the base of the castellated wall of the gulch, was one of the openings of the Comet mine—a lateral shaft sunk for exploring and ventilating purposes.

The mine buildings were all behind, and between the creek and the ventilating shaft was a cleared stretch, covered only with stones and boulders.

The on-coming horses were spread out as much as the harness would permit so that their trail covered considerable ground.

Burton realized his danger in an instant.

His team was stricken with the fear and excitement which come to animals under such conditions as then existed, and they were not obedient to the quickly applied lash nor the sharp commands of the deputy.

Trembling and crouching back in the harness they refused to budge and remained snorting and immovable in their tracks.

Diamond Dick leaped to their heads and managed to get them turned and started toward safety, but just at the critical moment when Burton should have continued

using his whip, the prisoner attempted to spring from the wagon.

"Old Lightning" dropped the lines, cast aside his whip and picked up his revolver.

"Sit where you are!" he roared, twining one hand in Morgan's collar and pressing the muzzle of the revolver against his temple. "If there's a wreck here you and I will be right in the middle of it and take our chances together!"

That was like Burton, according to all that Dick had heard of him.

If his duty called upon him to face death he would do so every time.

Seeing that Burton could not help to get the rig out of the way of danger, Dick struck the near horse with his hat and gave a shrill yell.

The animals lurched ahead and Dick sprang clear of the leaders of the twelve-horse team, escaping their hoofs by the fraction of an inch.

The mountain wagon was almost dragged clear.

The runaway horses escaped it and flashed along on their breakneck way, but one of the bobbing wagons leaped sideways, collided with the wheels of the other vehicle and cut them off as though made of cardboard.

Not only this, but the mountain wagon was hurled into the air by the impact, and when it fell was bottom side up.

The two passengers, in some miraculous way, escaped serious injury.

The old veteran darted for the wreck as soon as the two ore wagons were out of the way, and hauled out Burton, who was on his feet the moment he was disentangled from the *débris*.

"Morgan!" gasped Burton; "where is he?"

"He must be somewhere under these timbers," returned Dick.

"No, he's not there! Look out that he doesn't jump one of the horses and make off!"

The team had broken from the wagon and were gallop-

ing aimlessly around the canyon, still joined by the neck yoke.

Morgan was not with them, however.

CHAPTER IX.

DOWN IN THE MINE.

"There he is!" exclaimed Dick.

Half-way between where they were standing and the Comet shaft the handcuffed man could be seen running like a streak.

"Have you got a gun?" demanded Burton, quickly.

"Mine are somewhere under the wagon."

"My guns are at the office," answered Dick. "Take it easy, Burton. We'll get him!"

Both, by a common impulse, started after the fleeing murderer.

"Halt!" bellowed Burton.

He might as well have called to the wind to stop blowing for all the good it did.

Reaching the shaft, Morgan climbed over the edge to the ladder and disappeared from sight.

"He's out of the frying pan into the fire," panted Dick.

"The men down there will nab him, I suppose," returned Burton.

"There are no men down there—at least none of mine. I have laid off the night shift for to-night."

"He can't get out, can he?"

"You watch here and I'll go and post guards at every opening."

By this time some of the laid-off men had arrived and Dick sent them to recover the team that had broken from the wrecked wagon; after that he sped back toward the office.

Harry, Fletcher and Bertie had followed out a plan hastily conceived by the young sport, and had halted the runaways.

Drawn from the office by the unwonted noise, Bertie had not been slow in divining what was up.

To secure a riata, run close to the leaders and then cast

the noose was the work of but a few seconds; then he, and the old Serpent, and Fletcher threw themselves back on the rope and the off horse of the leading pair was hurled from its feet.

Immediately the others piled upon the fallen animal, and, when Dick arrived at the scene, a dozen men were busy extricating the frightened brutes and cutting them loose.

"I knew blamed well that Perk 'n'd hev trouble with these hyer critters!" growled Harry.

"How did the fellows in that wagon come out, Diamond Dick?" asked Bertie. "I just caught a glimpse of the collision down there, but didn't have time to give much attention to it."

"There were two men in that wagon; one was a deputy sheriff and the other was a prisoner whom he had run down in Montezuma. The prisoner got away and went down shaft number three, still wearing his handcuffs."

"Then we have two men in the mine!" exclaimed Fletcher. "An' the last one manacled!" added Harry. "He won't stand much of a show if he meets up with Skidmore."

"The deputy sheriff," pursued Dick, "is from Cochise, and his name is Harlow Burton."

"Thunder! Ole Lightning himself."

"And the prisoner was none other than—Morgan!"

There was a shout at this.

Dick was pressed for an explanation, but had not time.

"I want every outlet guarded, Harry," said the old veteran. "See that Coleman has the others, will you? Bertie, get my guns and meet me at shaft two. Also get a supply of candles and matches. Tell the engineer in the shaft house to watch for a signal for lights, but not to turn on a light until he hears the proper ring. Fletcher, see that these horses are taken care of, and if any of the brutes have broken their legs, shoot them. Perkins ought to be here soon, if he hasn't been thrown out of his wagon and hurt so he can't get here. After

the horses are in shape, join Bertie at shaft two. Fritz and Two-Spot can also be there and wait for Burton and me."

These orders were carried out with alacrity, and Dick went back down the trail to shaft three.

Burton was there, and two of the night shift were with him.

A third of the miners had caught the horses and was leading them toward the mine corral.

The two men with Burton were Sparks and Gaynor, believed by Dick to be trusty fellows and men on whom he could thoroughly rely.

"Sparks," said Dick, "you and Gaynor will stand guard over this shaft until relieved by my order. See that no one comes out of it. If you haven't any guns, Sparks, go to the office and tell Bertie to give you a couple. Burton, come with me. There's a warm job on for you and a few more of us."

The deputy started for shaft two with Dick, and on the way the old veteran explained the situation.

Burton was deeply impressed and more than glad of an opportunity to take part in the mine owners' night shift.

At shaft two quite an excited throng had gathered.

Bertie was there, carrying Diamond Dick's belt and guns, and loaded with a supply of candles; Fletcher was also at hand and Handsome Harry, and Fritz, and Two-Spot.

Coleman, the super, stood near, and the girls, Ella and Chris, were close to Bertie.

"You understand everything, do you, Coleman?" inquired Dick, taking his belt from Bertie and strapping it about his waist.

"I believe so, Mr. Wade."

"Remember, no light in the mine until I ring for it. We have two men to look for now, instead of one, and escape for them is impossible. Give two candles apiece all around, Bertie, and a supply of matches. The candles are to be held in reserve. I'll go first, and Burton, as he knows little of the workings, will follow close behind

me. By going down this shaft we can traverse the mine from end to end, and if the men we're after run before us, we will corner them before we're through. Burton and I will get off at the level and wait until the rest of you join us. Proceed with as little noise as possible, that's the main thing."

There was a profound silence among those present as the old veteran walked to the shaft and made ready to go down.

Already it was dusk in the camp and the arc lights, here and there, were flashing out like immense sparks.

The throbbing of the hoisting engine from the shaft house over the main shaft could be heard despite the falling of the stamps in the mill.

"I should think you would go down by the cage in the main shaft," suggested Coleman.

"I prefer to use the ladders," answered Dick, lowering himself down to the first rung, "and start our work at the extreme north end of the mine."

The veteran's habitual half smile was about his lips as he gave a final look and nod toward the anxious faces surrounding the shaft, then down he went.

Burton was quick to follow.

"Save a little of the hot work for the rest of us, Burton," laughed Harry, as the hunchback disappeared.

"I have a feeling in my bones that we'll all get our share," flung back the deputy, his voice welling up from the blackness.

Harry followed, and Bertie, who was intending to go next, was detained a few moments by the two girls.

"Take care you don't do anything reckless down there," whispered Ella, on one side.

"Be very careful, won't you, Bertie?" came in subdued and anxious tones from Chris.

Bertie nodded, laughed carelessly, and then followed Fletcher, who had gone after Harry, waving his hand to his sister and vouchsafing a quick look at Ella—a look in which there was much more than a friendly interest.

Bertie was startled to see the sentiment in Fletcher's

eyes since it was the very first intimation he had had that the young man cared for Ella Coleman.

Two Spot went after Bertie, and Fritz brought up the rear of Diamond Dick's night shift.

As the fat Dutch boy stood at the top of the ladder, he cast a languishing look in the direction of Ella and Chris.

"Don'd vorry aboutt me, girls," said he. "I was der vorst feller in a fighdt vat you efer heardt oof, und you can bed someding for noddin dot I'll make dot grazy man dink he vas hit mit a cyclone, oof he only gifs me der shance!"

"Don't try to feature yourself, Fritz," called up Two-Spot, from farther down the ladder; "all we've got to do is to stand by the electric bells and signal for the lights or the cage."

Just then there came a rippling crack of weapons from below, followed by a whiff of smoke and a smell of powder.

After that, when a few seconds had elapsed, a demoniacal, blood-curdling laugh was heard, growing fainter and fainter until it finally died away.

"Ach, du lieber!" exclaimed Fritz, and the next instant he also had vanished.

Diamond Dick's night shift were away on their still hunt.

Although they did not know it, there were more than two men in the mine.

This fact was to develop later.

CHAPTER X.

TREACHERY!

There were seven in the mine owner's night shift—Diamond Dick himself, Bertie, Burton, Handsome Harry, Fletcher, Fritz and Two-Spot.

Although, as stated, Dick did not know that there were any more than two men in the underground workings, he was taking this force along to guard entrances to various levels as he made a clean sweep through the mine.

No point behind was to be left unguarded.

Shaft number two marked the extreme north limit of the workings.

This shaft was only fifty feet in depth and ended in a level which ran for a hundred feet and dropped another fifty feet by means of a "winze."

Another ladder led to a lower level and, beginning as Dick was doing, it would be possible to go through the entire mine, searching every drift, stope, winze and cross cut.

There might be sharp clashes, but escape for Skidmore and Morgan was utterly impossible.

Burton stepped off the ladder close behind the old veteran, the latter thrusting out his hand and guiding him through the dense darkness, a few steps along the tunnel.

Harry was not slow in joining them, and then came Fletcher.

"Where are you?" called Fletcher, forgetting Dick's request that strict silence should be observed.

Hardly were the words uttered when a broadside was volleyed out of the blackness.

Fletcher gave vent to a muttered anathema, and Dick, the moment the unearthly laugh echoed along the drift, felt the deputy leap away from him.

"Come back!" shouted Diamond Dick, sternly. "Burton, I say!"

"I'll have him!" shouted back the deputy.

"The winze! Look out for the winze!"

A hundred feet away was the well, fifty feet deep.

Without a light, Burton would not be able to see it and would plunge downward to certain death.

There was no answer to this—merely an echoing fall of steps that quickly died away.

"I wonder what Burton means by that," muttered Dick.

"It's dollars ter dimes he'll git himself inter more trouble than he knows what ter do with ef he tries ter sashay through this mine in the dark, not knowin' a foot of it."

This from the old Serpent, who was mad clear through at the foolish move made by the man from Cochise.

"He's sharp enough, I reckon, to know what he's doing," said Bertie.

"Vat it is?" asked Fritz, tremulously.

"Fletcher hailed us, Dutchy," said Bertie, "and some one located him by the sound of his voice and blazed away. The bullets sung around us like hornets for about a second."

"Any one hurt?" asked Dick.

"I got stung on the left wrist," answered Fletcher. "It served me right for not remembering what you said about talking, Mr. Wade."

"How badly were you hurt?"

"Just enough to feel it."

"Haden't you better go back to the surface?"

"No, no! My usefulness hasn't been destroyed. I've tied a handkerchief around my wrist and it will do well enough."

"We've got a lot of ladders to climb."

"I'll agree to climb them with the rest of you."

"You located us to Skidmore, Fletcher," remarked Dick, in a low tone, "and his shooting located him to us. So the ground lays a little differently for both sides. I'll take the foot wall of the drift, Harry, and you take the hanging wall; Bertie can follow down the center, with the boys and Fletcher coming behind. In this way we'll cover the ground thoroughly, and make it impossible for either of the men we're after to hide away from us."

Silence was once more enjoined, and the little party proceeded slowly along the level.

Dick ran his hand along the foot wall as he proceeded and was able to tell, by the contour of the surface, when they had come close to the winze.

"Hist!" he whispered. "Halt, every one of you. We're at the drop-off and I'll go first. Feel your way carefully—a mis-step might mean death."

Dick went down and the others groped after him, all reaching the lower level in safety.

"Now," continued the old veteran, still in his whispering tones, "we know that neither of the men we are after, or the deputy sheriff, is in the fifty-foot level or the winze; in order to be sure that they don't get up there from the south, while we're searching the hundred-foot level to the north, Fritz and Two-Spot must

remain here on guard. There are only a hundred feet of this level to the north to search, and you and Fletcher might stay with the boys, Harry, while Bertie and I make a quick job of it."

"Supposin' Fletcher an' I go south ter the next winze, Dick?" whispered back Harry. "It's no further ter the winze in that direction than it is ter the breast of the level goin' the other way."

"All right, old pard," said Dick; "but wait at the winze for us."

Harry and Fletcher started south, and Diamond Dick and Bertie made northward.

The latter two had proceeded only a few yards when they heard a hoarse cry:

"This way, Dick! Here they are!"

Bertie started to run in the direction of the sound, but Dick stayed him with a swift grasp.

"Easy!" muttered the old veteran. "That wasn't Burton's voice, although somebody evidently wanted us to think that it was."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"It couldn't have been the maniac's, either, could it?"

"I think not."

"Then it must have been Morgan's."

"I don't think that, either."

"Why?"

"Morgan was manacled when he went down shaft three. In the space of time he has had at his disposal he couldn't have worked his way through the mine from the extreme south end to the extreme north. Ironed as he is, it would be a physical impossibility."

"But what's become of Burton?" queried Bertie.

He saw the logic of his father's reasoning, but felt that if neither the crazy man nor Morgan had voiced the cry there was only one other to do it—and that other, of course, was the deputy sheriff.

"I don't know what's become of Burton," answered Dick, in a tone of annoyance. "I didn't say so before the rest, but I consider that move of his peculiar to say the least."

"You don't think he's up to anything——"

"No, no, he's straight, and as clever as he is brave, but he was highly imprudent and headstrong in chasing

off by himself as he did. He is totally unfamiliar with the mine and ——"

Dick broke off his remarks suddenly as the sound of some one rushing towards them was heard.

The next instant Bertie was in a collision that knocked him clear off his feet.

As he went down he flung out his arms and tried to grapple with the man who had dashed against him.

This he could not do, and the man could be heard stumbling and rolling along the floor of the drift.

Quick as a flash Diamond Dick made a movement—Bertie could hear it as he struggled upright.

"Let me loose or I'll kill you!" a hoarse voice cried.

"I think not," retorted the imperturbable old veteran.

Then followed a sharp, short struggle.

"Can I be of any help?" asked Bertie, feeling his way along in the direction of the noise.

"No," panted the old veteran, "I've got him in chancery now. A light, Bertie, until we see who he is."

Bertie took a candle from the breast of his coat, and a match from his pocket, and soon had a light.

Flat on his back, on the tunnel floor, a man was lying.

Dick had his knee on the fellow's breast and was tightly gripping the wrist of a hand that held a knife.

"Closer, Bertie," said Dick; "I can't see his face plain enough."

Bertie came up beside his father, and, stooping, held the candle close to the blinking eyes of the man with the knife.

"Sparks!" he exclaimed.

"Sparks!" echoed Diamond Dick, bewildered at the discovery.

"Diamond Dick an' Bertie, or I'm a heathen!" exclaimed Sparks. "Thunder! I might hev knifed ye, Mr. Wade."

"So you might," returned Dick, dryly, "if I hadn't been too quick for you."

"You don't think I'd knife you on purpose, do you?"

"I don't think anything else. Sparks, you are a treacherous hound! I have never been more deceived in a man than I have been in you."

"I assure you, Mr. Wade, I——"

"Bah! Don't try to lie out of it!"

With that, Diamond Dick gave the fellow's wrist a fierce wrench and hurled the knife from his hand.

Setting his heel on the blade, Bertie ground it in pieces.

CHAPTER XI.

A MYSTERIOUS SHOT.

"Mr. Wade," whined Sparks, "if you would only let me explain how I came to be here——"

"Silence!" thundered Dick. "I ordered you to remain on guard at the mouth of shaft number three. The mere fact that you are here proves you a traitor."

The man shivered under the old veteran's clutch.

"Besides," went on Dick, "why did you call out, 'This way, Dick! here they are?'"

"I—I thought I had the crazy man and the other fellow."

"And now," was the scathing response, "you are trying to sneak out by hinting that you didn't know who it was you had run into! You're a black-hearted scoundrel, Sparks. There is more to this, Bertie, than we had at first supposed. What are we going to do for rope to tie this villain?"

Bertie pulled the flowing silk scarf from about his neck.

"This will do for his hands, Dick," answered the young sport, "and my belt will go twice around his ankles and buckle snugly enough."

"That will answer, I guess."

Bertie handed Dick the scarf, and the latter turned Sparks over on his face, doubled his arms behind his back and bound his wrists firmly with the silken thong.

Bertie's belt—it was not a cartridge belt, and the young sport's pockets were stuffed with ammunition—was then wrapped around the traitor's ankles and buckled.

"Catch him by the shoulders," said Dick, rising; "I'll lift his feet and we'll carry him to the winze."

This was done without delay.

Fritz and Two-Spot had heard enough of what was going on to become thoroughly excited over it.

They did not dare to leave their posts, however, so they waited until the two Dicks brought their prisoner and laid him down at the bottom of the winze.

Bertie's candle was still lighted and the boys instantly recognized Sparks.

"Gee!" exclaimed Two-Spot. "Has this dub passed up an honest life and gone out with a lead-pipe and a stockin' full of sand? His strong-arm work didn't last him long."

"Just how much do you know about all this business, Sparks?" inquired Dick.

"Will ye let me off easy if I split on the hull thing?"

"I'll make no promises. It will be better for you, though, if you tell what you know. Why did you leave the mouth of shaft number three?"

"Gaynor and I are old friends of Andy Heffner's——"

"Gaynor is in this, too, is he?"

"Yes. We met Heffner up in the hills, the other day, and Andy asked if we'd like to help him work a scheme. We told him we'd help him providin' thar wasn't any killin' in it an' a good big wad o' dinero fer us. 'Waal,' says Andy, 'hyer's fifty apiece fer you fellers on account. I'll tell ye later what I want ye ter do. Ye're workin' fer Kinglake, Morgan an' me from now on, understand.' Thet's what we understood, an' when Morgan got loose an' went down the hole we laid out ter go after him. Yer puttin' us on guard jest fitted with our plans, an' as soon as you started back towards the main shaft Gaynor an' me started down number three. Half-way down one o' the ladders broke with us an' we fell twenty feet, I sh'd jedge, an' kerried the ladder with us, bustin' it in pieces. We weren't either of us hurt much, an' we started off ter find Morgan."

"Weren't you afraid of the crazy man?" asked Bertie.

"We took our chances on the crazy man. We know every inch of the ole Comet, Mr. Wade, an' didn't think we could go far wrong in our hunt fer Morgan. In order ter hurry matters we separated, an' Gaynor took one line o' levels an' cross cuts an' I took another. I didn't have no luck, though. What kind o' luck Gaynor has had is more'n I kin tell."

"What were you going to do in case you found Morgan?" asked Bertie.

"We was goin' ter tell him thet he could git out o' shaft number three without nobody ter interfere."

Bertie turned quickly to the old veteran.

"If Gaynor has found Morgan," said the young sport, "they may be out of the mine and back into the hills by this time."

"You forget what Sparks said about the ladder in shaft three, Bertie," returned Dick.

"They won't git out o' thet shaft without help," said Sparks. "By the way," and a look of deep concern overspread Spark's face, and he raised himself by degrees to a sitting posture, his back against the hanging wall, "I kin tell you somethin' you ort ter know—you two fellers."

"What is it?" queried Bertie.

"It's about the—the powder."

"What about the powder?" inquired Dick, his penetrating eyes on Sparks' face.

"Gaynor has charge of the powder house, you know, since the other man has been fired, an'—an'——"

"Out with it!"

"Waal, last night there was two kegs—— Will you be easy on me ef I tell all I know about thet powder?"

"I'll make no promises," returned Dick, firmly.

"Waal, thar was two kegs o' powder thet Gaynor couldn't account fer when he come ter check up, an' he seen a man—a black-whiskered——"

A shot rang out, clear and incisive between the rocky walls of the tunnel.

"Himmelblitzen!" exclaimed Fritz.

"Great Scott!" broke from Two-Spot.

Astounded exclamations also fell from the lips of the two Diamond Dicks; for, simultaneously with the shot, the form of Sparks could be seen to jerk convulsively and then fall and straighten out along the floor.

The miner uttered no sound, not even a groan, but on the heels of the report came that unearthly, mocking laugh, dying gradually away along the corridor.

Bertie sprang to Sparks and made a quick examination.

"Dead?" asked Dick.

The young sport looked up and nodded.

"He was shot," said Bertie, "just as he was about to reveal a secret concerning two kegs of powder."

"Two kegs of powder were stolen from the powder house by a black-whiskered man," returned Dick, hurriedly; "that much we know. If the powder was brought down here and exploded, some of the levels and other workings would be ruined and thousands of dollars' worth of damage would be caused." He looked hastily around. "What in the world has become of Harry and Fletcher?"

The old Serpent and his companion appeared to have vanished as mysteriously as had Burton.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SHOOTING FLAME.

"Der shot come from dot end oof der dannel," murmured Fritz, pointing in the direction which Harry and Fletcher had taken.

"I wonder if Morgan and the man who is off his trolley have got together and done up Harry and Fletcher as well as Burton?"

This from Two-Spot in a wondering way as his eyes endeavored to pierce the darkness.

"It can't be that they have injured either Harry or Fletcher," said Bertie. "There would have been more noise than we have heard, if there had been any clash. They have probably passed down the other winze and into the hundred-and-fifty-foot tunnel. The maniac was in the level we are now on, beyond the winze; consequently he was missed by Harry and Fletcher."

"We have got to proceed with our search and proceed quickly," said Dick, briskly. "You will remain here, Two-Spot, and guard this shaft. Have you a revolver?"

"I've got two poppers," answered the lad.

"Very well. Fritz, you will go up to the surface and have Coleman send two more men over to watch the mouth of shaft three. I think Sparks told us the truth when he spoke of the broken ladder, but Gaynor might be able to mend the ladder, in some way, and we can't leave that exit unguarded."

"I've got to stay here all by my lonesome, and with—that, eh?" muttered Two-Spot, looking at the dead man.

"There's no other way. I picked you for the duty because I thought you would be able to do it much better than Fritz. After you deliver your message to Coleman, Fritz," added Dick, turning to the Dutch boy, "you may come back and keep Two-Spot company."

Thereupon the old veteran started off.

"Put out the candle, Bertie, and come along."

The young sport obeyed, and they renewed their search with a full appreciation of the perils—born of the tragedy they had just witnessed—in front of them.

Half-way between the place they had left the boys and the winze that dropped to the next lower level, they became aware of a dull glow that was permeating the corridor.

What could it mean?

Hastening their steps, they finally made out, some distance ahead of them, a shooting flame that was hissing its way along the floor of the level like a serpent of fire.

Voicing a quick cry of alarm, the young sport leaped forward.

"Beware of the well!" cried Dick.

Bertie was well aware of the location of the pit—in the dim light he could see it like a round black blot on the floor of the level.

He was racing for life against the shooting flame!

Arrived at the edge of the winze he cleared the mouth of it at a flying leap, dashed on and hurled his body upon the fire.

The next moment he had smothered the blaze.

A second later Diamond Dick was at the young sport's side.

"What was it?" asked the veteran; "a lighted fuse?"

"Yes; a whole coil, I should say, unwound along the floor of the level. Look here!"

Scratching a match, he held it in front of him above a keg.

There was a hole in the side of the keg and the end of the fuse was sticking out of it.

"There is one of those missing kegs of powder," said Bertie, smothering the match in his fingers.

"You put out the blaze just in time," said Dick, quietly. "Where is the other keg of powder? That's the next thing to be found."

The keg was hidden away in a crevice of the wall and the hundred-foot level was explored clear to the main shaft.

Their search was barren of results save for the discovery, at the main shaft, of a rope attached to a piece of shoring and hanging downward.

The rope was drawn upward and found to be knotted at every foot for ease in ascending or descending.

"That's the way the man who shot Sparks got down to the hundred-and-fifty-foot level," said Dick. "We are gradually driving him into a corner and probably Morgan, as well. We'll leave the rope up here, and that will make it impossible for the crazy man to use it again. Now for the level below, there will be development there, I am sure."

They retraced their way to the second winze and descended it without mishap.

"The overhead stope!" whispered Bertie, when they were at the bottom of the well. "There is one over this level, and it has not been worked in for a couple of days. Possibly that is where the maniac laid in hiding while the day shift was on."

"We'll have a look at the stope first," returned Diamond Dick, starting along the drift. "Strange we don't hear anything from Harry or Fletcher——"

He stumbled over something, just then; not a stone, but something that was soft and yielded to his foot.

In a flash he had scratched a match, and there, in front of him, just under the edge of the stope, lay Harry and Fletcher, as still and silent as the dead!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE OVERHEAD STOPE.

A "stope" is an excavation, either above or beneath a tunnel, the former being known as an "overhead stope" and the latter as an "underhand stope."

In the overhead stope the excavating is begun in the roof of the tunnel and the vein is worked out upward and backward in step-like form.

When Handsome Harry and Fletcher left the Diamond Dicks they had gone no farther than the winze when the old Serpent thought of the stope.

"Thar's whar thet crazy hombre is hangin' out," said he, "an' I'll bet my pile ag'in a Chink wash ticket! We'll jest go down an' see, Tom."

"Mr. Wade said we were to wait at the winze," demurred Fletcher.

"Shore he did, but I'm gamblin' he didn't never think o' thet thar stope," chuckled Harry.

"Had we better disobey orders?"

"I reckon Dick won't make no great to-do ef we jest nose around thet stope, Tom. Leastways, I'll take the hull responsibility."

So they went down the ventilating shaft and climbed up into the stope of the hundred-and-fifty-foot level.

Searching the stope, especially in the Stygian darkness, was laborious work.

The bottom of the excavation slanted at a pitch of at least thirty-three and a third degrees and was terribly uneven, while the roof was jagged and rough and so low that the searchers got many a knock on the head as they proceeded.

"I reckon thar ain't no one hyer arter all," grumbled Harry, rubbing his head for the dozenth time. "Ef thar was, we'd be findin' 'em, 'pears like."

Hardly had he spoken the words when there was a rattle of steel and something hard descended on his head with crushing force.

The blow fell at the precise point where Harry had laid his hand and but for this fact there is small doubt but that his skull would have been crushed.

"Gle-ory to snakes an' pile-drivers!" shouted Harry, and the next moment he had his assailant in a tight embrace. "Give up," he roared, "or I'll knock yer skull ag'in the rocks!"

The other made no answer, but a terrific struggle was at once begun, with the result that both combatants were hurled from their feet and went bounding and carroming down the stope, carrying Fletcher and some one else with them.

That was all Harry could remember.

When he revived, Bertie was bending over him and there was a candle flaring in a niche in the hanging wall above, and a few feet to the right.

"Jumpin' sandhills, son!" exclaimed Harry, carrying both hands to his head. "I dreamt I was up on Pike's Peak an' was comin' down, end over end, all tangled up with one o' them big Mogul locomotives. Gle-ory, what a roaring thar is in this ole think box o' mine! Is my neck broke?"

The old Serpent began moving his head about as he asked the question.

"Your neck's all right, I guess, old pard," answered Bertie.

"Legs an' arms all hyer?"

The Californian got his extremities in motion to settle any doubts he had in his own mind.

"You seem to be all together, Harry," said the young sport.

Harry arose to a sitting posture, voicing a heavy groan as he did so.

On his left, in a like position, his back against the wall, was Fletcher.

Diamond Dick was standing in front of him.

"What was that that struck us, Harry?" inquired Fletcher, throwing a glance at the old Serpent; "a cyclone?"

"A cyclone in handcuffs, Tom," answered Harry.

"What was the cause of all this, Harry?" inquired Dick.

The Californian explained up to the point where his senses left him.

"I don't know what 'Tom was doin'," added Harry, when his recital was finished. "All I know is that me an' the chap I was tangled up with knocked Tom an' some 'un else off their pins an' kerried 'em along with us."

"Were you attacked, too, Tom?" said Bertie.

"Yes, at just about the time Harry was. I was handicapped with this lame wrist, and the man who set on me was getting the better of the set-to. If Harry hadn't sent us pounding down the stope there wouldn't have been much left of me. Who were the two who assaulted us?"

"Morgan and Gaynor," replied Dick, promptly. "They must have fared much better than you fellows, for they were evidently able to take themselves off. We're driving the whole outfit ahead of us, and the chase is narrowing down."

"Gaynor?" muttered Harry, blankly. "What Gaynor are ye referrin' to, Dick? Is the crazy man's name Gaynor instead of Skidmore?"

Harry was put straight regarding the matter of Sparks and Gaynor and told of the events that had preceded the arrival of the two Dicks at the foot of the stope.

"Thunder!" cried Harry. "Then thar's another keg o' powder somewhar in these diggin's. We've gotter locate thet, Dick, an' purty *pronto*, too."

"Before we go any farther," suggested Bertie, "it would be well to search the stope with a candle. It's strange we don't run across Burton!"

"A good idea!" exclaimed Dick! "Take the candle and go up there, Bertie."

The young sport did so, but discovered nothing.

The man from Cochise was nowhere to be found; nor were there any traces of the others for whom they were looking.

When Bertie came back and reported the old veteran was thoughtful for a moment.

"Gaynor and Morgan were unable to get out of shaft three, just as Sparks said," he remarked finally, "and they are trying every opening in order to discover a method of escape from the mine. They'll fail in this, though, and we can drive them before us until they're

cornered. Do you and Fletcher feel able to continue the hunt with Bertie and me, Harry?"

"Able?" echoed the Californian, springing to his feet. "D'ye opine, Dick, thet I'll let a feller in handcuffs knock me out? All I want is a chance ter git even with him. I'm as fit as a fiddle, pardy, an' jest pinin' ter bring this affair to a wind-up."

"My sentiments to a T," added Fletcher, getting up. "I've still got my guns," he went on, feeling about his waist, "and if it comes to a show-down I can shoot as straight as ever."

Fletcher's remark about his guns gave Harry an idea and he felt for his but couldn't find them.

A moment's search revealed them on the floor of the level, however, and he picked them up, examined them swiftly and then thrust them into his pockets.

"Ff thet attack on us hadn't been so blame sudden," said he, "these boys would hev talked a little an' the hull story would hev turned out different."

"Don't shoot the crazy man except as a matter of self-defense," said Dick. "The poor fellow, of course, isn't responsible, and what we want to do is to capture him and turn him over to the authorities to be conveyed to an asylum."

"I understand about sparin' him," returned Harry, "but thet traitor, Gaynor, an' the murderer, Morgan, air the ones I'm thinkin' of in particular."

"It will be just as well to capture them alive—if we can. Let's proceed with the search."

Making along the tunnel, they came finally to a cross cut which communicated with a parallel tunnel at the same depth; this parallel drift opened into the level they were now in by a second cross cut, almost a quarter of a mile south.

If the whole four proceeded down the main level it would give the men they were after an opportunity to get behind them; therefore it was necessary to divide forces.

Dick explained and Harry said that he and Fletcher would take the cross cut.

The two detachments then continued on.

The old veteran and the young sport, still groping their way in the dark, had not gone far when a faint light, similar to the one they had seen leaping along the fuse, illumined the vista ahead of them.

The thought that struck them both was that the

second keg of powder was about to be set off, and they gripped their revolvers and quickened their pace to a run.

Presently they heard a voice roaring a wild song and, before many minutes had passed, they saw the crazy man ahead of them.

He was standing in the middle of the level, waving a torch above his head.

The torch, to all appearances, was formed by tying a bunch of oil-soaked "waste" around the end of a pick handle.

The crazy man was a weird-looking sight with his long, unkempt hair and beard and his tattered clothes.

It was hard to distinguish the words of his song, and they could make out only one line—"For I'm the King of the Cannibal Islands!"

"There!" whispered Bertie; "we've caught sight of Skidmore, anyway."

"And that other keg of powder isn't figuring yet," whispered back Dick, "that's a load off my mind. We must capture that fellow before he gets away from us—and we must capture him without firing a shot, if possible."

"How'll we do it?"

"By diplomacy. Let's see if we can't humor his crazy whims. Put up your weapons, Bertie, and don't draw them. The very sight of our shooters may goad him to frenzy."

It was a desperate step they were undertaking, yet the revolvers were slipped back into their places.

The next instant, still yelling his song, Skidmore came bounding toward them.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MADMAN.

The maniac broke off his gibbering song with a wild screech when he caught sight of the Diamond Dicks.

Coming to a swift halt, he bent his huge frame nearly double and leaned forward, the torch above his head and his eyes glittering under his bushy brows.

"Who are you?" hissed Skidmore; "thieves? robbers? Have you come to steal my mine away from me?"

"No, your majesty," returned Dick, with a low bow, "we have come to help you keep your mine."

"Ah!" and a grim smile passed over the maniac's

weather-beaten face. "Were you sent by the sultan of Turkey or by the czar of Russia?"

"The sultan sent me, and the czar sent my friend, here."

"I know them both," went on the crazy man, complacently. "I have played many a game of poker with the czar and as for the sultan he's an easy thing for any one at seven-up. But, say! I want to tell you something."

Skidmore straightened up, laid a finger on his lips and looked apprehensively around; then he came a step closer to the Dicks.

"This mine is so deep that satan has turned his devils loose on me," the crazy man went on, in a low tone. "One of the devils started to tell about the powder—about the powder that I stole from the magazine last night, when the boss of the powder house was getting some fuse and some caps." He laughed in his eerie, jerky manner—it was a laugh to make the blood run cold. "I heard what the devil said and I shot him before he could give me away. I shot him, I tell you, just as I shot the others who have chased me through the hills. And you—you—YOU," he screeched, flaming with sudden suspicion, "look like two of the devils who were with the devil I shot!"

Like lightning his hand leaped to the breast of his ragged coat and drew a revolver.

It was a critical moment, but Diamond Dick was equal to the occasion.

He lifted his hand warningly.

"What would your friend the sultan say," said Dick, in a soothing tone, "if he knew you had shot the man he had sent to help you? And the czar—what would he say?"

Skidmore paused undecided for a moment, then slipped the revolver back into the breast of his coat.

"That's true. The czar and the sultan are my great and good friends. If I killed you it might grieve them. But the humpbacked devil, I have him and he shall die. Would you like to see him die?"

The Dicks were startled at this, for it was plain that Skidmore had reference to Burton.

"You have not killed him yet?"

"No, I have been waiting."

"Will you take us with you to see him?"

"Have you wings? Can you fly a hundred miles up over the earth?"

"No," replied Dick, gravely, "I left my wings in Turkey, and my friend left his in Russia."

"That's too bad!" exclaimed Skidmore, and it was plain that he was greatly annoyed.

Suddenly he gave a shout.

"I have it, I have it! I'll take you up, and you won't have to use your wings, either. We shall see the hump-backed devil."

Turning suddenly, he sped away like the wind, passed the mainshaft and went on and on, his light vanishing abruptly like a candle snuffed by a rifle ball.

"What's the meaning of that move?" asked Bertie.

"There's no accounting for a crazy man's actions," returned Dick, "but I guess we're on the track of Burton. He has been captured by Skidmore, and we'll have to play our cards cleverly if we save him. By the way, there is no objection to our having a little light on the subject."

They were close to the shaft and the uprights along which the cage ran, and the old veteran pressed an electric button four times.

This was the signal for the engineer in the hoist house to turn on the electric current, and almost instantly the various levels and shafts of the Comet were ablaze with light.

The level they were now on was one of the principal levels of the mine.

A portion of it was in treacherous soil and it was "shored up" with side and roof timbers.

Along the floor ran a small track on which the little ore cars were operated by hand power.

As they hurried on they kept a sharp lookout for Skidmore.

Bertie was on the left side of the level, and Diamond Dick on the right, and, as they ran, they kept their gaze fixed on the regions ahead.

The young sport was suddenly stopped by one of the huge timbers, on his side of the tunnel, trembling in its place and then falling toward him.

Astounded at the beam's peculiar actions, Bertie halted for a fraction of a moment and then threw himself sideways to escape.

As ill luck would have it, his foot caught against the

track and he was thrown to the floor of the drift, the beam falling across one of his legs.

With a yell, Skidmore leaped out from a cranny in the wall, behind the beam, and plunged on up the tunnel, torch in hand.

Dick would have gone to Bertie's assistance, but the young sport called out:

"Never mind me! I'm caught and can't get away, but I'm not hurt—my leg was saved by the steel rail. Watch Skidmore! Look! The second keg of powder!"

The old veteran whirled around.

A short distance away he saw the second keg of powder and Skidmore was standing over it with his torch.

He ran toward the crazy man, but the latter jerked out his revolver.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the maniac. "I'll touch off the powder and we'll all go up together!"

It was a thrilling moment.

The fire of the torch played all around the keg, Skidmore manipulating it with one hand and pointing the revolver at Dick with the other.

"You haven't any wings," roared the crazy man, "and we've got to go up if we want to see the hump-backed devil. Are you afraid to go up? Are you afraid?"

The old veteran was seriously debating the advisability of drawing his revolver and ending the farce then and there; but before he could do so a bungling move on the part of Skidmore overturned the keg.

To the astonishment of the two Dicks, there was no bottom in the keg, and it was empty of powder save for a little heap on the ground.

A smothered laugh broke from Bertie, and Diamond Dick himself could hardly keep back a smile as Skidmore touched the powder with his torch and it flared up with a sudden report that did no damage whatever save for the fumes which, in the close atmosphere, set them all to coughing.

How was it that this keg was empty and the other, as they knew from personal examination, was full?

This was a point which was shortly to be cleared up to their entire satisfaction.

"Ha!" exclaimed Skidmore, putting up his revolver, "we are now in the place where the hump-backed devil was taken. We only arose a hundred miles, but the hump-backed fiend shall go a thousand—clear into eter-

nity. Bullets are too good for him. Were you hurt by the jar?"

"Not at all," answered Dick, with a straight face.

There was a comical side to the present matter, but he realized as well as any one that the crazy man would have to be handled just so or he would be a difficult proposition to take care of. "My friend, the Russian, however," he added, "seems to have had something fall on him. Help me to release him and then we will go and see this fiend you speak of."

Leaning his torch against the wall, Skidmore lent willing aid to the release of the young sport, and the latter got up, but little hurt by the beam.

Bertie looked at the timber curiously.

It had been wedged in under the roof, but had been lowered and displaced by a removal of sufficient earth behind it to form a hiding-place for the maniac.

It was here that he retreated, probably, when hard pressed by his pursuers and, so abruptly could he vanish, that there was some ground for the regular night shift's theory that they had had dealings with a "spook."

The beam was laid to one side and Skidmore picked up his torch and waved it melodramatically as he said:

"Follow me, friends, and you will see what revenge I take upon the fiend who was sent to rob me of my mine."

"Lead on," said Dick.

They pushed along the gallery for a considerable distance and came to a point where Burton was tied and stretched out along the floor of the tunnel, between the tracks.

It was then they discovered what had become of the rest of the powder contained in the second keg.

It was heaped up in little mounds around the deputy, and beside him and up and down his body were piled sticks of giant powder.

The Diamond Dicks halted aghast.

If a flame was applied to that heap of explosives, not only would Burton, and all the rest of them, pay the penalty of their lives, but that entire portion of the mine would be wrecked!

As the old veteran and the young sport gazed, horror-stricken, Skidmore flew past them with his torch and stooped down.

CHAPTER XV.

SAVING BURTON.

Then, if ever, was the time for instant action.

Actuated by a common impulse, Dick and Bertie both sprang at Skidmore and the old veteran caught the lowered torch and jerked it from the maniac's hand.

Skidmore snarled like a hyena at bay.

"That man is a friend!" said Dick, hoping that tactful methods might still prevail. "You must not do this!"

The madman was infuriated.

Like a tiger, he leaped at Diamond Dick's throat, they clinched, fell and but for Bertie's quick action the torch would have been in the powder in spite of Dick's efforts to prevent it.

The young sport snatched the firebrand away and crushed out the light under his foot.

After that he flew to the old veteran's aid, and it required the combined strength of both of them to prevail over the maniac.

Skidmore was at last thrown down and bound with some of the ropes which were taken from Burton.

The deputy sheriff was cramped and sore, and he drew a deep and tremulous breath of relief when he got up from the rails and looked down at the crazy man who was writhing and raving on the floor near by.

"I've been in some mighty tight corners," said he, "and in places where I would have bet a thousand to one I never could wriggle out, but I never went through such an experience as I have to-night."

"You yourself were partly to blame, Burton," said Dick. "You shouldn't have left us as you did."

"I admit that I was in the wrong, but when I heard that unearthly yell I started on the impulse of the moment."

"Didn't you hear me call you to come back?"

"Yes, but I was right at the coat tails of the man I wanted to catch. I could feel his flying garments and I caught them only to have the rags come away in my grasp. Before I knew what had happened he had stopped and dropped to his knees. I plunged over him and rolled along the tunnel like a ball. Before I could get up he was upon me, and I thought my jig was danced for sure. I may not look it, but I'm pretty strong, yet I could do nothing, and was like a child in the crazy man's grasp. He throttled me within an inch of my life,

there in the darkness, tied me fast quicker than I ever saw a man do the trick and threw me over his shoulder like a bag of meal and carried me down the winze. That brought us to the hundred-foot level, and he followed that past the other winze and laid low close to the main shaft. I was dropped on the ground and he placed a hand over my mouth. We saw your candle light and took note of your moving forms and listened to your talk. It was he who fired the shot that killed the traitor —"

"We knew that already," commented Dick.

"Guessed it, eh?"

"No; wormed it out of Skidmore. But go on, Burton."

"Fearing I might yell out," resumed Burton, "Skidmore banged me on the head, then took me on his shoulder again and slipped over into the main shaft on a rope. That's another time I thought I was gone. To my dying day I'll never be able to explain how he slipped down that rope to the next level and yet kept me from dropping to the bottom of the shaft.

"Finally he got off the rope, and I was carried somewhere—I didn't know where, having lost all idea of direction, and everything else—but at last I was slammed down again and left to myself for a space. Presently Skidmore came back with a lighted torch and rolling a keg of powder in front of him with his foot.

"He knocked in the head of the keg with a rock and took out some loose powder and some sticks of dynamite, and—and—— Well, gentlemen, by that time my nerve was in rags. For all the refinement of cruelty commend me to a lunatic. As I lay there, I believe I must have sweat blood.

"Picking up his torch, Skidmore began walking around me as though trying to pick out a good place in which to set off the blow-up. As he walked around and around he began to sing. Suddenly away he went on some other tangent, and I had a little breathing spell.

"With the turning on of the lights my nerve came back. By lifting my head I could see that the powder keg was gone, and I wondered what the nation he was up to. I could hear voices along the tunnel, and could distinguish your tones, Mr. Wade, so I began to feel that I would pull through, after all. You can bet something handsome that I'll never forget the Comet and the

time I had while serving on Diamond Dick's night shift. But what about my man? Any trace of him?"

"My old pard had an encounter with Morgan," replied Dick, "but the villain slipped away. If you heard our talk with the traitor, Sparks, you know that Morgan had two helpers who came into the Comet to get him out."

"I heard all that—these galleries carry sound like so many speaking tubes. There's another man helping Morgan."

"Morgan can't get away, though. Every exit is guarded and we'll get him, sooner or later."

"Hist!" put in Bertie. "Listen."

To their ears came a long jingling sound.

"What's that?" asked Burton.

"It's the cage bell," returned Dick.

"They're ringing for the cage," added Bertie.

"Stay here, Bertie," said Dick, quickly, "and look after all this powder, and see that Skidmore doesn't break loose. Come with me, Burton! That call for the cage means something and we must find out what."

Immediately they started for the main shaft.

As they advanced, the grinding of the gear wheels, as the drum turned and released the wire cable, came to them.

All at once the grinding stopped.

"The cage is at the level," cried Dick, as he ran.

"Some one is getting on, I can hear them!"

"Yes, and I can see them," added Burton.

"Two men."

Ting, ting.

Two rings of the bell.

"They're going up," said Dick, increasing his speed.

"Dick!" bellowed the familiar voice of the old Serpent from the other side of the shaft. "Whar air ye, Dick!"

By this time the gear wheels of the hoisting engine were grinding again.

"Here!" shouted the old veteran.

"Morgan an' Gaynor are off up the shaft!" came the bellowing tones of old Harry. "Consarn the varmints, I don't know but they've killed Fletcher."

A couple of jumps more and Dick was at the bell.

A quick ring followed his pressure.

By the sound they could tell that the cage had stopped.

Dick gave another ring, and, a second or two later the cage started down again.

"Stand ready on that side, Burton!" called the old veteran. "Harry, mind your eye, now! The cage is coming back, and is bringing Morgan and Gaynor with it. They thought they'd try to dodge the guards at the main shaft, but we'll fool 'em!"

The clank and grind were abruptly broken into by another sound—a sound as of some violent movement taking place in the cage.

The car shook and rattled, and it seemed as though some heavy weight had dropped upon it. Down it came, and when it reached the level where Dick, Harry and Burton were waiting, they executed a leap from three sides, a revolver cracking spitefully in the old veteran's face.

CHAPTER XVI.

GAYNOR IS CAPTURED.

To the bewilderment of Dick and his two friends, there was no one in the cage.

"Up thar!" cried Harry, pointing.

On the beam over the cage, clinging to the wire cable, they saw Gaynor.

"What's become of Morgan?" demanded Burton, excitedly.

For the moment Diamond Dick had not thought of Morgan; he was occupied with wondering how he had escaped that shot fired at him point-blank by the man on the cross beam.

One shot was all Gaynor took, and that was more for the purpose of dazing his enemies and gaining a brief second of time.

To this fact was probably due Dick's preservation, the bullet whistling past his ear uncomfortably close.

Laying hold of the side of the cage, Burton began to climb up after Gaynor.

The latter, however, made a sudden flying leap over Burton's head, landed in the level and set off at a rousing sprint.

"Harry," said Dick, "he's running straight toward Bertie. Get off and chase after him, and he'll be between two fires. Burton and I will give our attention to Morgan."

There was no time for questions, and the old Serpent made haste to take up the pursuit.

"Come down, Burton," said Dick to the deputy sheriff. "That's a dangerous place there."

"I thought Handsome Harry said the two of them boarded the car?" queried Burton, slipping back to the old veteran's side.

"That's just what he did say."

"Then where's Morgan?"

"He made a flying leap at the hundred-foot-level and succeeded in making a landing."

"If he did that, why didn't Gaynor do the same thing?"

"Gaynor tried it and fell back on the cage. Didn't you hear the noise while the cage was coming down?"

"I heard a noise, but I didn't know that was what caused it."

"Knowing we'd board the cage as soon as it reached the hundred-and-fifty-foot level, Gaynor crawled up on the beam and got away by jumping over our heads."

"It's a wonder you wasn't killed! I saw the scoundrel when he bent down from the beam and fired at you. I wouldn't have stood in your shoes then for a farm."

"A miss is as good as a mile," returned Dick. "If those fellows had made use of the push button in the cage they'd have had the engineer pretty near crazy with signals."

Dick touched a button in one corner, giving two rings.

"We'll go up to the next level and have a look for Morgan."

"Probably he's got away by this time."

"You forget what I told you about every outlet of the Comet being watched. Besides, there are a couple of pretty spry youngsters on guard at the foot of the ladder that leads up toward shaft number two."

"That fat boy and that slangy kid?"

"That's the team."

"What do they amount to? Morgan would walk right over them."

"You don't know those lads so well as I do," returned Dick.

They were close to the place where they were to disembark and Dick gave the signal to stop at the proper time.

A moment later they were off and were hastening toward the foot of the first winze.

Meantime Bertie had been busying himself looking after Skidmore.

The contortions which the maniac's huge frame underwent were terrific, and the young sport feared that he might break his bonds in spite of the fact that he had been tied with extra care.

He heard the excitement farther down the tunnel, the shouts, the jangle of the bell, and finally the shot.

He did not worry much, however, for he knew there were enough men to handle the difficulty.

Forcing Skidmore on his side, Bertie stooped to look at the ropes.

He had barely assured himself that they were all right when he heard a rapid fall of feet and became suddenly aware that some one was upon him.

Rising, he whirled about just in time to see Gaynor making for him with a knife in his hand.

"Stand out of my way!" shouted Gaynor, fiercely.

"Halt!" was the young sport's reply.

"Blast you, take that!"

Gaynor struck a vicious blow with the blade, and Bertie caught the wrist of the descending hand with a skillful blow, sending the knife flying to the side of the drift.

Leaping backward, Gaynor turned to retrace his steps and found himself caught in the old Serpent's arms.

"Cinched, ye traitor!" cried Harry. "I'd like ter wring yer neck fer what ye done, but I reckon I'll hev ter be contented with seein' ye drummed out o' camp. What's to be done with this varmint, son?"

"He'll have to be tied, I suppose. Where's Diamond Dick?"

"Gone after Morgan."

"Did Morgan get away?"

"Temporarily fer the time bein'. Whar's some rope?"

"Here's some we had left over after tying Skidmore."

Bertie kicked some pieces of rope toward Harry and the latter very shortly had Gaynor where he could do no harm to any one.

"So you fellers nipped the crazy man, did ye?" queried Harry, stepping over and looking down at Skidmore.

"We did, and it was a job, too. Diamond Dick's night shift has pretty near reached the finish of its work, and it would be just as well to get our prisoners to the main shaft."

"Thunder!" exclaimed the old Serpent; "I'm forgettin' Tom."

"What's the matter with Tom?"

Bertie remembered then to have heard the shout which the Californian gave a little time after Dick and Burton had left.

"He got a rap on the head thet looked ter me like it might be purty serious. I'll tote Gaynor to the shaft, then go fer 'Tom an' bring him ter the same place an' arter thet, son, I'll come hyer an' help ye move Skidmore."

Harry left at once, carrying Gaynor over his shoulder.

In much less time than Bertie thought it would take him to do the work he had mapped out for himself, he was back.

"How's Tom by this time?" Bertie inquired.

The old Serpent shook his head.

"He's out of his wits, an' the case looks tough fer him," said he.

"Poor Chris!" exclaimed Bertie. "This will be hard for her. How did it happen?"

"It was some time arter 'Tom an' me left you an' Dick at the cross cut. Tom was purty well pegged—I c'd see thet even in the dark, an' with half an eye, but he was game an' wouldn't give up. In rollin' down thet stope he got hurt a good deal wuss'n he let on. Arter a while he allowed thet he'd hev ter set down. I says ter him, 'All right, pardy,' says I, 'thar's no partic'ler hurry. Ef Dick skeers up any quarry,' I says, 'the birds 'll fly this way ef they git loose from him an' Bertie.'

"While we was settin' thar I heerd some 'un. 'Who is it?' I yells; 'speak out 'r take the consequences an' ye gotter speak blame quick.'

"Then some 'un says in a voice thet sounded exactly like your'n, son, 'Don't do anythin' rash, old pard, it's Bertie.' I couldn't hardly b'lieve it, but the voice was so nat'ral I hesitated about denyin' it. 'Stay hyer,' says the voice; 'I gotter go past ye.' I got suspicious, then. 'Why hev ye gotter go past?' I says. 'Diming Dick says so,' was the answer.

"All this time the voice was drawin' nearer. 'It ain't Bertie!' yells Tom, all to once. I heerd Tom make a move an' then came a thump an' a groan. At that minit the 'lectric lights shot out jest in time so'st I c'd ketch Tom as he fell back.

"I heerd a clank o' manacles an' then I knowed Morgan was around—would hev knowed even ef I hadn't seen him an' Gaynor pikin' around the cross cut.

"I couldn't leave Tom jest then, kase he was as limp as a rag an' bleedin' from a place over his left eye. 'Tom!' I says, but a half moan was all I got. Easin' him down I tied a handkercher over his forehead an' then jumped up an' took arter Morgan and Gaynor. Thar was murder in my soul, then, son, an' ef I had had a chaust at them two scoundrels my guns would hev talked an' don't ye fergit it."

"Waal, they was too cute fer me fer a time, but the lights brightened things up, an' I wasn't long gittin' the trail. At last I seen 'em at the main shaft an' heerd the cage bell an' thet was my cue ter let off thet whoop fer Dick. That's about all, son, except I think we ort ter do a little rushin' in gittin' Tom to the surface an' inter a doctor's hands."

"I agree with you there, old pard," answered Bertie. "I don't think there would be any objection to our going up with Tom and the prisoners, even if Diamond Dick and Burton aren't quite ready."

Between them they succeeded in getting Skidmore to the main shaft.

The maniac had writhed and twisted and raved until he was completely exhausted so that he did not give his bearers much trouble.

When they reached the shaft they found Dick and the boys there—the three of them clustered about Tom.

"What do ye make out about him, Dick?" asked Harry.

"He'll have a hard rub if he pulls through," replied Dick. "Lift him in your arms, Harry, and take him on the car."

"How about Morgan?"

"Burton has him in the cage."

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW MORGAN WAS TAKEN.

It will be remembered that Two-Spot was left alone at the foot of the first winze, Fritz being sent to the surface to tell Coleman to post more guards at shaft three, and Diamond Dick and Bertie starting off on the trail of Handsome Harry, Fletcher and Burton.

Two-Spot was not a particle superstitious, but the presence of Sparks' body so close to him would have been enough to try the nerves of a much older boy.

So he sat there, counting the seconds in his mind and

wondering how long he'd be alone, when he heard a hollow groan.

Two-Spot felt his hair begin to raise and an almost resistible inclination to run took possession of him.

Once more came the groan, long-drawn-out and most unearthly.

What was it, anyhow?

A third time the sound was repeated and, this time, so much blood-curdling horror was thrown into it that it was completely overdone.

Besides, Two-Spot located it as coming from the winze, and he knew it must be Fritz.

For an answer, he let off a groan of his own and had the satisfaction of hearing some one give a gasp and fall from the ladder.

Again Two-Spot gave vent to the most uncanny sound he could utter, and he could hear Fritz Dunder's teeth knocking together like castanets.

"Himmelblitzen!" whispered the Dutch boy. "Doo-Shpot! Vere you vas, hey? Ach, dis is so awful! Vat is der madder yet? Doo-Shpot! Say someding oder I vill faint fits righdt on der shpot, yaw, so helup me!"

"How do you like the spook business, Dutch?" asked Two-Spot, unable to hold himself in any longer.

"Dere vasn't some fun in dot," retorted the injured Fritz. "Dot's a nice vay to dreat a feller."

"You began it."

"Sure, aber oof I had foundt you vas shkared I'd have shtopped righdt away kevick. Be a goot feller now und get away from dot monkey-doodle pitzness."

"Did you do what Bertie told you to?"

"You bed my life. Der vas doo fellers at der top oof shaft numper doo, und dey vas dalking mit deirselfs, und nefer saidt a vord about expeding any vone to gome oudt oof der mine, so ven I made a noise dey shumped liked anyding. Ach, id vas sooch a goot shoke! Coleman und a whole lot more vas ofer by der shaft house und dey asked me vat vas der drouble vat caused der shooding, und I told dem vat a dime ve vas hafing. Den, ven I shpoke vat Tiamont Tick say dot I should, I gome away und Coleman vent to haf more men put at shaft numper dree."

After that the boys had a long and dreary wait.

Possibly it is not to be wondered at that they should fall asleep, and that is precisely what they did.

Two-Spot had no idea how long he had been "pound-

ing his ear," as he would have called it, when a noise awakened him.

He started up, blinking in the bright light that now flooded the winze and the level.

It took him a moment to collect his thoughts and remember where he was.

Something had awakened him and what was it?

As he asked himself the question a rattle of steel came from the winze, and he cast a hurried glance over in that direction.

A man with manacled hands was trying to climb the ladder!

He was succeeding, too, after a fashion and had already mounted several feet on his way to the top.

Undoubtedly it was Morgan and, from the frantic haste he displayed, he was evidently being pursued.

For Two-Spot to jump up, arouse Fritz with a wild yell and leap to the ladder, required but a moment.

In climbing, Morgan was obliged to release each rung with both hands and then make a grab at the next.

Catching him by the ankles with a strong grip, Two-Spot hung to the man with all his weight.

In his handicapped condition the strain was too much for Morgan, and he fell to the bottom of the winze.

Two-Spot's alertness enabled him to avoid any harmful consequences that might have resulted from the fall.

Fritz, who was by this time thoroughly awake, rushed to his friend's assistance, and, between them, they succeeded in holding Morgan down until Diamond Dick and Burton arrived.

"Is dis der feller you been lookin' for?" asked Fritz.

"Have you boys got my prisoner there?" demanded Burton.

"Sure thing," answered Two-Spot.

"What did I tell you, Burton?" queried Dick. "I knew the boys wouldn't let Morgan get by them."

"Where's Gaynor?" inquired Two-Spot.

"He must be captured by this time, I suppose," replied Dick. "We left him in a tunnel with Bertie at one end and Handsome Harry at the other."

"Then it's dollars to doughnuts that he's met his finish."

"Und vere is der grazzy man?" asked Fritz.

"A prisoner."

"Hooray!" cried Two-Spot. "Diamond Dick's night shift is all right, I tell you those."

"I'm afraid not, my boy," returned Dick.

"What's wrong?"

"Fletcher has been badly hurt and we must get back to the lower level as soon as we can and ascertain the extent of his injuries. Burton, bring your prisoner along. We'll take him down to the next drift in the cage and then to the top with the rest of us."

"Keno," replied the deputy.

Bending down, Burton released the cuff about Morgan's left wrist and attached it to his own left hand.

"I thought of doing this in the wagon," remarked Burton, grimly, "and if I had, Morgan would never have got into the Comet mine."

"I'd have kerried you with me," said the desperado, through his teeth.

"If you two had been handcuffed together like that," put in Diamond Dick, "I don't think either of you would ever have escaped alive from that wrecked wagon."

"I'll have a cinch from now on, and I'll bet on it," said the man from Cochise, grimly. "You've put me to so much trouble, Morgan, that I'd be only too glad to have you give me a chance to use my shooter. Step right and act square if you know when you're well off."

They proceeded along the gallery until the main shaft was reached and then got into the cage,

Dick rang to be lowered.

"It's a safe guess," said he, "that they're wondering up there in the shaft house what we fellows are trying to do, running up and down in this way between the hundred and the hundred-and-fifty-foot level."

When Dick and the boys got off at the next stop, the first person they saw was Tom Fletcher, lying beside the shaft with a bloody handkerchief about his head.

Dick knew that Harry must be helping Bertie, and that both he and the young sport would soon arrive, so he knelt down to examine the extent of Fletcher's injuries.

His experienced eye soon detected the serious nature of the youth's wound, and when the young sport and his old pard arrived with Skidmore, Dick gave his opinion as has already been noted.

"This will be a dear night's work for us," remarked the old veteran sadly, when they were all on the car, "if Fletcher's life has to pay for it."

This was the general comment, coupled with expressions of sympathy for Chris.

So, in spite of the success of their night's exploit, it was a heavy-hearted load that the cage carried to the surface.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SQUARING ACCOUNTS.

"What in the name of time were you chaps doing down there?" were the first words that greeted the party in the cage as they came into the view of the group of watchers in the shaft house.

Coleman was the speaker, and when he saw the still form of young Fletcher he curbed his manner somewhat.

"Fletcher isn't dead, is he?" the super added, in a subdued tone.

"No," answered Diamond Dick, "but he's close to it."

The old veteran looked round at the waiting group as Harry stepped off the car with his unconscious burden.

"Where's his sister?" asked Dick.

"She and Ella were here up till midnight awaiting news, and then I insisted that they go up to the house and go to bed," replied Coleman.

"I'm glad of that. Send a man post-haste to Comet City, Coleman, and have him bring the doctor. Don't let a word about Tom's condition reach Chris until we hear what the doctor has to say. We may have cheering news for the girl—although I doubt it."

Harry bore Tom away to the office, and Mrs. Coleman went immediately to his bedside.

It was just dawn.

Diamond Dick and his friends had put in the entire night in their still hunt underground, and a wearing time they had of it.

The old veteran was pleased to see, among those in the shaft house no less a person than Tim McBride.

"I stopped here on my way from Montezuma," explained McBride, "and when they told me they thought Skidmore was in the Comet, I waited to find out whether the surmise was true or not."

"This is the man, isn't it?" asked Dick, as the crazy man was carried from the cage.

"You've got him, all right. Did he do any damage?"

"Not so much as he might have done. He killed one man, though."

"One of your miners?"

Dick nodded.

He did not explain that the man who was killed had proved himself a traitor; such a statement would not have helped matters, and the old veteran kept the information to himself.

McBride turned to Burton.

"Well, Old Lightning," he laughed, "you've got your man, I see."

"You bet I've got him," answered Burton. "If he gets away between here and Phoenix he'll have to take me with him."

"Going to Phoenix, are you?"

"If I can get there. I've got a team, but my wagon has been smashed into kindling wood."

"I've got a buckboard you're welcome to take," spoke up Dick.

"Much obliged, Mr. Wade; I'll avail myself of it after I have a couple of hours' rest and a bit to eat. You've given me a dance to lively music, the last few hours, and it has worn on me considerable."

"How many seats has that buckboard got?" asked McBride.

"Three."

"I suppose I can go along with Burton, then, and take Skidmore?"

"Yes; and you'll have some one else to take, besides, Skidmore."

"Who?"

Dick nodded in Gaynor's direction.

"It's very possible that man will have to be held for murder."

"I wasn't the one who struck Fletcher," averred Gaynor.

"Don't try to sneak out of it," sneered Morgan. "Ye know ye did it. Look at the butt of his revolver—mebby it'll show some marks of havin' been used."

Bertie displayed the two six shooters which he had taken from Gaynor's pockets.

"These are the weapons I gave him," said the young sport, "when he came to me and said that Diamond Dick had told him and Sparks off to guard the mouth of shaft number three. And this weapon proves his guilt. Look!"

Bertie held out the weapon for the inspection of those present.

Two or three hairs had caught in the stock—hairs that had undoubtedly come from the head of Tom Fletcher.

"I'll take that along with me," said McBride, and the young sport handed it to him. "It will come handy at the trial. We will have three to take care of on our trip to Phoenix, Mr. Wade, and Burton and I ought to have another man."

"I'll send some one with you after you have breakfast and Burton gets a little rest."

The mine owner turned to Coleman.

"Coleman," said he, "you will find the body of Sparks at the foot of the first winze reached from shaft

number two. Send down after the remains and notify Sparks' brother—he's a bartender, I believe, for Happy Jack, in Comet City."

"I'll attend to it at once," replied the super.

"And there's another thing," added Dick, detaining Coleman as he was about to go away. "In the hundred-and-fifty-foot level, south of the main shaft, you will find a lot of dynamite and loose powder. Have it gathered up at once and brought to the magazine."

"How did it get there?" asked the surprised super.

"Skidmore stole it from the powder house in some way night before last. He stole two kegs, in fact, and the other keg is between the winze and the main shaft of the hundred-foot level, hidden behind a pile of *débris* on the right side of the tunnel. See that the explosive is out of the way before the day shift goes on."

Coleman nodded and hurried off.

Dick turned to the young sport.

"See if Gaynor has the magazine keys about him, Bertie."

The keys were found, and Dick took possession of them.

"We'll be sure of our next man," observed the veteran, "before we put him in charge of the powder house."

"You won't know whether you can be sure of him or not," retorted Gaynor. "There are two other men in Heffner's pay, at this mine, and——"

Realizing that his anger was causing him to say too much, Gaynor bit his words abruptly short.

Dick whirled on him and gave him a piercing look.

"What's that you're saying?" he demanded, sharply.

Gaynor made no reply.

"You tell me there are two more traitors in camp?"

"Let me at the whelp, Dick," spoke up Harry, who had entered the shaft house unnoticed; "I'll bet a poncho I kin choke the information out of him."

Dick made a motion that informed Harry he was to subside—something which the old Serpent did, but very much against his will.

Nothing could be forced from Gaynor, but the little slip of the tongue of which he had been guilty was sufficient to furnish Dick with an unpleasant train of thought.

"We've got Morgan," said Bertie, "and that takes one out of our trio of enemies. After this I'm of the opinion that Heffner and Kinglake will sing pretty small."

"No," said Dick, starting for the door of the shaft house, "I know Andy Heffner too well. He's a desperate rogue, and never knows when he's beaten. As for Kinglake—well, he's a chip off the same block. Those two men, however, will have our attention next, and,

unless I'm greatly mistaken they'll find that the Diamond Dicks themselves are far from being quitters."

Just then the breakfast gong was hammered by the Japanese cook at the boarding-house, and the old veteran and his friends walked over in that direction.

Thus closed the "still hunt underground."

It had been carried through with the usual vigor which characterized every enterprise entered upon by the Diamond Dicks, and had met with the usual success which attended their efforts.

"Wade luck" these successes were generally termed, but there was always less of luck than of courage, experience and skill.

A man from the mine accompanied Burton and McBride back to Phoenix, and the three men they had in charge were safely landed behind the bars.

Skidmore was sent to an asylum for the insane, and the man from Cochise took Morgan to the scene of the murder he had committed, and he was there tried and sent to the penitentiary for a life term.

As for Gaynor, he fared hardly enough—getting a dozen years at hard labor—but he would have received the extreme penalty had Fletcher died.

Tom, owing to the doctor's skill and the good nursing of his sister and Ella Coleman and her mother, pulled through.

He was as well as ever, in fact, when the time came for the Diamond Dicks and Handsome Harry to take the field against Kinglake and Heffner.

"I'd give a hull lot of money," Harry remarked to Dick, on the afternoon following their night's work in the mine, "ter know what kind of a scheme Heffner was layin' ter work with Sparks an' Gaynor."

"It was something shrewd and unscrupulous, beyond a doubt," answered Dick. "The capture of Morgan caused Sparks and Gaynor to show their hands before the trap was ready for springing. There are two other traitors in camp, however, if Gaynor's slip of the tongue is to be believed, and Heffner will set his trap again. He's not the man to be discouraged with one failure—or with a dozen, for that matter. He will be a menace to our success here, Harry, until he is removed from these hills and placed where he belongs."

"He belongs in the pen."

"That's where I mean to land him—and Kinglake, too."

"When ye goin' ter begin the job?"

"It will be some time yet, I hope. I shail lay back on my oars and wait till Heffner begins his game. After he once opens the ball it won't be the Diamond Dicks that do all the dancing."

The old Serpent of Siskiyou was all "touch and go," and did not fancy a waiting policy, yet that was the only consistent line of action which the young and old Diamond Dick could follow in their dealing with the gamblers.

TO BE CONTINUED.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A REPORTER?

Amateur Journalism Prize Contest. COSTLY PRIZES GIVEN AWAY.

Boys, could you write up a fire, a runaway, an accident, or even a murder, if you were asked to? Would you like to be sent out by the editor of a great metropolitan paper to do just that thing? Well, here is the chance to show what you can do.

The editor of Diamond Dick Weekly assigns every reader of this Weekly on any case he may select.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ASSIGNMENT.

Take any incident you may think of, write it up as graphically as you can, make it full of "action," and send it to us. To the boys who send in the best "stories" will be awarded valuable prizes.

It makes no difference how short the articles are, but no contribution must be longer than five hundred words.

FIVE FIRST PRIZES

Each one of the Five who send us the Most Interesting and Best Written "Stories" will receive ten books selected from the following list. They may have their own choice of the books. These books include the finest and most interesting boys' stories ever published.

- 1—The Boat Club.....By Oliver Optic
- 2—Cadet Kit Carey...By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 3—All Aboard.....By Oliver Optic
- 4—Lieutenant Carey's Luck,
By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 5—Now or Never.....By Oliver Optic
- 6—Captain Carey of the Gallant Seventh,
By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 7—Chased Through Norway.....By James Otis
- 8—Kit Carey's Protege,
By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 9—Try Again.....By Oliver Optic
- 10—Don Kirk, the Boy Cattle King,
By Gilbert Patten
- 11—From Tent to White House, (Boyhood and
Life of President McKinley),
By Edward S. Ellis
- 12—Don Kirk's Mine.....By Gilbert Patten
- 13—Up the Ladder.....By Lieutenant Murray
- 14—The Young Colonists, A Story of Life and
War in Africa.....G. A. Henty
- 15—Midshipman Merrill,
By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 16—The White King of Africa,
By William Murray Graydon
- 17—Ensign Merrill...By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 18—The Silver Ship.....By Leon Lewis
- 19—Jack Archer.....By G. A. Henty
- 20—Wheeling for Fortune.....By James Otis
- 21—Won at West Point,
By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 22—From Lake to Wilderness,
By William Murray Graydon
- 23—The Dragon and the Raven...By G. A. Henty
- 24—The Boy from the West...By Gilbert Patten
- 25—Through the Fray.....By G. A. Henty
- 26—The Cryptogram...By William Murray Graydon
- 27—Centre-Board Jim...By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 28—The Boy Bombers.....By Gilbert Patten
- 29—True to the Old Flag.....By G. A. Henty
- 30—Aster Simple.....By Captain Mariyat
- 31—The Cruise of the Snow Bird,
By Gordon Stables
- 32—The Curse of Carnes' Hold...By G. A. Henty
- 33—The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green,
By Gilbert Patten
- 34—The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green,
By Cuthbert Bede, B. A.

- 35—In the Reign of Terror.....By G. A. Henty
- 36—In Barracks and Wigwam,
By William Murray Graydon
- 37—Commodore Junk...By George Manville Fenn
- 38—Gay Dashleigh's Academy Days
By Arthur Sewall
- 39—With Boer and Britisher in the Transvaal,
By William Murray Graydon
- 40—Canoe and Campfire...By St. George Rathbone
- 41—Check 2134.....By Edward S. Ellis
- 42—The Young Acrobat...By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 43—In Southern Seas.....By Frank H. Converse
- 44—The Golden Magnet...By George Manville Fenn
- 45—Jack Wheeler; A Western Story,
By Capt. David Southwick
- 46—Poor and Proud.....By Oliver Optic
- 47—Eric Dane.....By Matthew White, Jr.
- 48—Luke Bennett's Hide-Out,
By Capt. C. B. Ashley, U. S. Scout
- 49—The Mystery of a Diamond,
By Frank H. Converse
- 50—Dean Dunham.....By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 51—Tom Tracy.....By Arthur Lee Putnam
- 52—From Farm Boy to Senator,
By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 53—The Adventures of a New York Telegraph
Boy.....By Arthur Lee Putnam
- 54—Joe Nichols; or, Difficulties Overcome,
By Alfred Oldfellow
- 55—A Voyage to the Gold Coast,
By Frank H. Converse
- 56—Nature's Young Noblemen,
By Brooks McCormick
- 57—The Gold of Flat Top Mountain,
By Frank H. Converse
- 58—Gilbert, the Trapper...By Captain C. B. Ashley
- 59—The Rajah's Fortress,
By William Murray Graydon
- 60—The Mountain Cave.....By George H. Coomer
- 61—The Eric Train Boy...By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 62—How He Won.....By Brooks McCormick
- 63—In the Sunk Lands.....By Walter F. Bruns
- 64—The Tour of a Private Car,
By Matthew White, Jr.
- 65—That Treasure.....By Frank H. Converse
- 66—A Young Vagabond.....By Z. R. Bennett

- 67—Tom Brown's School Days,
By Thomas Hughes
- 68—Smuggler's Cave.....By Annie Ashmore
- 69—Phate Island.....By Harry Collingwood
- 70—The New and Amusing History of Sandford
and Merton.....By F. C. Burnand
- 71—Mark Seaworth's Voyage on the Indian
Ocean.....By William H. G. Kingston
- 72—The Way to Success; or, Tom Randall,
By Alfred Oldfellow
- 73—The Wolf Boy of China...By William Dalton
- 74—The Dingo Boys...By George Manville Fenn
- 75—The Boys in the Forecastle,
By George H. Coomer
- 76—The War Tiger—A Tale of the Conquest of
China.....By William Dalton
- 77—Perils of the Jungle.....By Edward S. Ellis
- 78—Both Sides of the Continent,
By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 79—The Rival Battalions...By Brooks McCormick
- 80—Afloat in the Forest...By Captain Mayne Reid
- 81—Arthur Helmuth of the H. & N. C. Railway,
By Edward S. Ellis
- 82—The Young Editor...By Matthew White, Jr.
- 83—The Tiger Prince.....By William Dalton
- 84—The Butcher of Cawnpore,
By William Murray Graydon
- 85—Facing Death.....By G. A. Henty
- 86—Calmur's Cave.....By Richard Dowling
- 87—The Five Hundred Dollar Check,
By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 88—My Mysterious Fortune,
By Matthew White, Jr.
- 89—Clinton; or, Boy Life in the Country,
By Walter Almwel
- 90—Out on the Pampas.....By G. A. Henty
- 91—The Crusoes of Guiana...By Louis Bousenard
- 92—Spectre Gold.....By Headon Hill
- 93—A New York Boy.....By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 94—Oscar; or, The Boy Who Had His Own Way,
By Walter Almwel
- 95—By Sheer Pluck.....By G. A. Henty
- 96—An Unprovoked Mutiny.....By James Otis
- 97—The Giant Islanders...By Brooks McCormick
- 98—The Grand Chase...By George Manville Fenn
- 99—The Cruise of the Restless; or, On Inland
Waterways.....By James Otis
- 100—Maori and Settler.....By G. A. Henty

TEN SECOND PRIZES

The ten who send us the next best stories will each have a choice of any five books in the above list.

FIFTEEN THIRD PRIZES

For Fifteen Third Best "Stories." A choice of any three books in the above list.

FOR THE NEXT BEST TWENTY

A choice of any two books in the above list.

The Contest closes Dec. 1.
Send in your "stories" at once, boys. We are going to publish all the best ones during the progress of the Contest.
We will have to reserve to ourselves the right of judging which "story" has the most merit, but our readers know that they may depend upon Street & Smith and on their absolute fairness and justice in conducting Contests. This one will be no exception to the rule.

REMEMBER!

Whether your "story" wins a prize or not, it stands a good chance of being published, together with the name of the writer.
To become a contestant for these prizes, you must cut out the Amateur

Journalism Coupon, printed herewith; fill it out properly, and send it to Diamond Dick Weekly, care of Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York City, together with your "story." No "story" will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it.

COUPON

Diamond Dick Weekly Amateur Journalism Contest No. 1

Date.....1901

Name.....

City or Town.....

State.....

Title of Story.....

AMATEUR JOURNALISM DEPARTMENT.

During the progress of the Amateur Journalism Contest this department will be devoted to the publication of the best stories sent in by the contestants.

The entries are coming in fast, boys, so get into line and send us your contributions as soon as possible. We present this week some of the best "stories" received so far.

A Faithful Dog.

(By William Dodge, 16 years old, Syracuse, N. Y.)

One evening last October Eddie Gerrold, aged nine years, of Newtonville, a small hamlet in the interior of Watervliet, N. Y., went into the woods in the rear of his father's house to gather some nuts. He obtained a little bag from his mother to put the nuts in, and started off for the woods in high glee. As evening advanced he did not return, and his parents became anxious and went in search of him, but failed to find him. They continued their search all day Friday, and on the evening of that day returned home tired and footsore, and almost gave the child up as lost.

About 9 o'clock on Saturday morning, as most of the residents of the hamlet were in Mr. Gerrold's house sympathizing with the family in the loss of their child, "Jack," a large Newfoundland dog, that has been an attache of the Gerrold family since he was a month old, entered and seemed uneasy, and kept whining and barking at intervals. He was put outside the door for disturbing the family, and after remaining there for some time he ran into a Mrs. Scoville's house next door, and grasped a loaf of bread that the lady of the house had put under the stove, and ran off with it in his mouth in the direction of the woods.

When Mr. Scoville returned, his wife related the incident to him, and he felt surprised, as Jack had always maintained a character for strict honesty. He in turn related the incident to Mr. Gerrold, and that gentleman felt pretty certain that the dog had some idea of where the child was, and new hope was inspired in the family, and they waited impatiently for the dog's return. Finally he did return in about an hour, and exhibited the same uneasiness that was remarked before.

After trying various ruses to attract the family to follow him to the woods, he finally started in that direction with more than half of the residents of the hamlet after him. He led them through many winding paths, until at last they reached a chestnut grove, and there they found the boy lying under a tree with his left leg broken.

The boy himself told the facts of the case substantially as follows: He was upon the tree, and shaking it with all his might to shake off the nuts, and lost his hold and tumbled down, his leg striking the ground with force. He fainted, and the first thing that met his gaze when he became conscious was the dog standing over him. This was on Friday evening, and the dog never left his side, but kept barking with all his might until Saturday morning.

The pangs of hunger the boy felt pretty keenly at this time, and he made an attempt to reach some nuts that lay on the ground a short distance from him. When the dog observed this he started off and returned in a short time with the loaf in his mouth, which he deposited in the boy's lap. He ate of it with relish, and then became lonesome and began to cry. The dog started off again and this time returned with his friends to him. The boy was removed home and a doctor summoned from Cohoes, who set the wounded limb.

A Noble Act.

(By Robert Gorham, 13 years old, St. Louis, Mo.)

One hot morning in the month of July, two boys were seen standing on the edge of a pier, preparing themselves for a swim. The largest was named Edward Boband, and the smaller one Jack Faust. Ed jumped into the water first, Jack asking:

"Is it cold?"

Ed replied:

"No, it is not cold at all."

All of a sudden Jack heard a scream, "Help! help!"

"I say, Ed, did you hear that?"

"Hear what, Jack?"

"There it goes again. Somebody crying for help."

On looking around, he perceived on the surface of the water a little girl just about to sink. He plunged into the water without taking off his clothes, swam to the spot where the little girl was about to sink, and grasping her by her beautiful hair, swam to the shore. On

reaching it, he placed the little girl into her father's arms, and fell senseless to the ground.

On recovering, he found himself in a neat little bedroom, and a lady sitting by his side. She smiled as she saw him open his eyes, and pointing to his now dry clothes, she left the room.

Jack then got up and put on his clothes, and was just going to leave the room when, judge of his surprise on seeing his mother coming upstairs, for Ed had already told her about the accident.

It was a glad meeting. The mother blessed her son for his bravery, and they went downstairs, where they met the gentleman and his daughter, whom Jack had saved.

Mr. Smith, for that was the gentleman's name, thanked him for his timely aid, and told him if he ever was in need of a friend to call on him. They then bid our hero good-by, and told him they never would forget his "noble act."

A Goat Story.

(By George Perry, St. Louis, Mo.)

A St. Louis goat was nibbling the scant herbage beside the street on the morning of the Fourth of July, when he attracted the attention of a group of the worst youngsters in the ward, and they resolved upon the brilliant expedient of tying a bunch of crackers to his tail, just to see what he would do. They surrounded the goat, and, after infinite strategy and a final desperate battle, captured him. Then came the task of attaching the bunch of crackers to the animal's tail, and a difficult task it proved. Goats, in general, have no tail to speak of, and this goat, in particular, is caudally deficient. His tail is but an inch long, perfectly smooth, and with an unwavering tendency to point upward, toward the zenith. The boys tried for half an hour to fasten on the crackers, without succeeding, until finally one boy, who had learned to tie some kind of a sailor's knot, accomplished the feat satisfactorily and thoroughly. Then the crackers were ignited, and the boys formed a hollow square about the goat, awaiting developments.

At the first fizz of the burning crackers, the animal leaped perpendicularly five feet upward, and came down stiff legged, casting, at the same time, a dreadfully interesting look over its shoulder at its rear. As the fizz changed into a burning sputter, it leaped higher still, and came down more stiff-legged than before, and then began shying about sideways. The boys, previous to affixing the crackers, had taken the goat into a yard with a high board fence about it, so that it couldn't get away, anyhow, but they still preserved their hollow square, to observe the phenomena of the occasion more closely. Soon the first cracker exploded, and then fol-

lowed a frightful scene. The goat took in the situation fully. With a revengeful "bla-a-ab" and a rush, he knocked a corner boy out of that hollow square and a rod away, and then wheeled like lightning and charged again. The boys started for that fence, in a wild stampede, but not one of them reached it. The goat shot about like a giant boomerang, and every time he struck a boy that boy went to grass a total wreck. The crackers roared and flamed, and the goat resembled a comet with a fiery tail, careering through the air, as he bounded from side to side, and smote the hapless boys! Before the bunch of crackers was half gone every boy was down, and all afraid to get up again before the raging beast, save one boy, who was lying close by the fence, and thought he might get over before the whirlwind would reach him. He made the attempt, but wasn't quite quick enough, and dropped again, just in time to let the goat pass over him with terrible force, and pass through the fence like a cannonball, carrying off a board, as he went. The boys rushed to the gap thus made, and saw a ball of fire far down the street, going at the rate of 1000 miles an hour, and they saw no more goat on the Fourth of July.

On the next morning, however, the animal was feeding about in his accustomed haunts, and, but for the blackened appearance of its stump of a tail, and a sinister gleam in its eye, no one would have suspected that it had aided in celebrating the Centennial Fourth.

Hooley's Cow.

(By Frank Christman, Texarkana, Ark.)

Hooley's mother-in-law made him a present of a cow the other day. Next day Hooley was around bragging about his fine cow, his generous mother-in-law, and if there was any one thing he did hanker after it was fresh milk.

But the grocer heard of it, and sent his bill round to Hooley, with the message that if it was not paid immediately he would send for his cow for payment. Then Hooley borrowed fifty dollars off his wife and paid the bill.

Hooley's tailor had a judgment against him for sixty dollars, and when he heard Hooley had a cow he sent the sheriff after the cow. This made Hooley mad, but he managed to raise the money to pay the bill, and kept his cow.

Hooley owed the printer for thirty years' subscriptions to his paper, and when the printer sent his bill to Hooley with the message that if it was not paid in two hours sharp Hooley would have one cow less, it made Hooley awful mad; but as before he managed to pay the bill and keep his cow.

Things went on smoothly for two months, when

Hooley's mother-in-law died. The next day after the funeral the undertaker called on Hooley to inform him that he held a mortgage on his cow.

"How so?" asked Hooley.

"Why, don't you know your mother-in-law gave me a mortgage on that cow two weeks before she gave the cow to you to secure the payment of forty dollars yet back on her coffin. You see, she had a fancy of buying her own coffin."

Then Hooley threatened to shoot the undertaker if he took the cow. But the undertaker took the cow, and Hooley now says if any body gives him anything they must first pay his debts.

Hunting a Madman.

(By Edward Harrigan, Toledo, Ohio.)

In a small village near here a man named Luke Harrison reported one day that he had seen a strange-looking creature enter a cave about a mile away, while out hunting, and raised a party of men to go and find him. Accordingly they started for the cave, and reached it after a few minutes' walk. Seeing no sign of life about, they proposed that some one of the party should go in and reconnoiter the cavern, while the rest waited outside. The one that was to go in was a young man named George Roper, and after securing a torch from a dead tree a little way off, he lit it and entered with a club in his hand and a knife in his belt.

After entering about forty feet, he fancied that he heard a sound not far away, and holding the light above his head, he peered into the gloom. Seeing nothing, he advanced a little farther to a curve in the passage, and seeing daylight a little ahead, he advanced to it cautiously and arrived upon a ledge of rock about ten feet square overlooking a deep chasm. Upon this ledge were a number of boulders, and while looking at one he was sure he saw a shadow on the side of it going over to it. He looked toward where he thought the shadow was thrown from, and perceived the object of his search. Standing gazing at him was the most frightful-looking human being he had ever gazed upon.

The moment he saw George he snatched up a stone and flung it at him, and had Roper not dodged, it would likely have knocked him down, for it broke in a hundred pieces on the rock behind him. Seeing this, he sprang at George and struck him a tremendous blow, which knocked him senseless to the earth. He was a fearful-looking creature standing over the body. He was clad in an old pair of ragged trousers which had seen a great deal of hard usage. His breast was bare, and the muscles of his arms swelled out like great cords. His hair was long and matted, and hung loosely upon his shoulders.

His eyes glared like fire, and any one looking at him would know that he was a maniac.

For at least an hour George lay senseless and the madman glaring at him. Slowly he recovered his senses until at last he was able to get up. Again the madman sprang at him, and they grappled. George's hands were in such a position that he could not reach his knife. They were gradually nearing the edge. The maniac was intent on throwing George over the brink. At last, as they were within three feet of the edge George gave one powerful jerk of his arm and freed it. Reaching for his knife, he found to his horror that it had slipped from his belt in the struggle.

At that moment there was a rush of many feet, and glancing toward the entrance George saw his companions, who, alarmed at his long absence, had followed him in. The maniac, seeing them, let go his hold, and with one wild shriek jumped over the cliff and was dashed to pieces on the rocks below. George returned home with his friends, but he will never forget his struggle with the madman.

Capturing Burglars.

(By Arthur Mitchell, Cambridge, Mass.)

It was a bitter cold night last December, and the snow was falling fast, when a boy might have been seen walking down Broad street, East Cambridge.

He was thinly clad in an old rusty coat and pants, that looked as though they had been pretty well used. As he walked along he kept muttering to himself:

"I wonder where I can sleep to-night?"

Suddenly he spied a shed that belonged to Farmer Donohue.

Running forward, he gave the door a pull, and to his great joy it swung open. Jumping in, he found some straw, upon which he threw himself, and soon fell asleep.

How long he slept he knew not, but hearing voices, he listened.

"I tell you what, Bill," said some one, "it's about time that we were going."

"All right," said the one called Bill; "come ahead."

Nick, for that is my hero's name, quietly crept after the two men, and saw one of them take a small saw out of his pocket and commence to saw through the frame of one of the windows of the farmer's house.

Nick waited to see no more; but running quickly to the door, he rang the bell, which brought one of Farmer Donohue's male help.

"What do you want at this time of night, youngster?" he demanded, in a surly tone.

Nick quickly told him all he had heard, and that the men were already at work downstairs.

"All right," replied the man. "Step inside, and I will be down in a few moments."

Pretty soon he heard voices on the stairs, and the farmer and two more men came down to where Nick was.

"Where are they, my boy?" the farmer asked.

Nick pointed downstairs, where a faint scratching was heard.

The farmer and his men crept downstairs to where the noise was, and throwing the door open, he cried:

"Surrender!"

One of the thieves drew out a pistol and fired at the farmer, but Nick saw the action, and rushing forward, pushed his arm up in the air, so that the bullet passed through the ceiling.

The rest is soon told. The two thieves were soon taken to the lock-up, where they afterward got ten years apiece.

Nick received a reward for his promptness in the affair, and has now a happy home in Farmer Donohue's house.

A Mule to Bet On.

(By Will Jackson, Providence, R. I.)

Jake Johnson has a mule. There is nothing remarkable in the mere fact of his being the possessor of such an animal, but there is something peculiar about the mule. He (the animal) can kick higher, hit harder on the slightest provocation, and act uglier than any other mule known on record.

One morning, riding his mule to market, Jack met Jim Boggs, against whom he had an old but concealed grudge. He knew Boggs' weakness lay in bragging and betting; therefore he saluted him accordingly.

"How are you, Jim? Fine morning."

"Hearty, squire," replied Jim. "Fine weather. Nice mule that you are riding on. Will he do to bet on?"

"Bet on? Guess he will do that. I tell you, Jim Boggs, he's the best mule in the country."

"Great smash! is that so?" ejaculated Jim.

"Solid truth, every word of it. Tell you confidentially, Jim, I am taking him down for betting purposes. I bet he can kick a fly off from any man without its hurting him."

"Now look here, squire," said Jim, "I am not a betting character, but I'll bet you something on that myself."

"Jim, there's no use—don't bet. I don't want to win your money."

"Don't be alarmed, squire. I'll take such bets as them every time."

"Well, if you are determined to bet, I will risk a small stake—say five dollars."

"All right, squire—you're my man. But who'll he kick the fly off? There is no one here but you and I. You try it."

"No," says Johnson; "I have to be by the mule's head to order him."

"Oh, yaas," says Jim. "Then probably I'm the man. Waal, I'll do it; but you are to bet ten against my five if I risk it."

"All right," quoth the squire. "Now there's a fly on your shoulder. Stand still." And Johnson adjusted the mule.

"Whist, Jervey!" said he.

The mule raised his heels with such velocity and force that Boggs rose in the air like a bird and alighted on all fours in a muddy ditch, bang up against a rail fence.

Rising in a towering passion, he exclaimed:

"Yaas, that is smart! I knew your darned mule couldn't do it. You had all that put up. I wouldn't be kicked like that for fifty dollars. You can just fork over them stakes for it, any way."

"Not so fast, Jim. Jerve did just what I said he would—that is, kick a fly off a man without its hurting him. You see, the mule is not hurt by the operation. However, if you are not satisfied we will try it again as often as you wish."

"The deuce take you," growled Jim, "I'd rather have a barn fall on me at once than have the critter kick me again. Keep the stakes, but don't say anything about it."

Couldn't Fool That Dog.

(By Jasper Towne, 17 years old, Manchester, N. H.)

A butcher in Manchester, N. H., tried to fool a dog which was in the habit of coming to his stand daily for meat, but the dog was able to hold his own, and more, too. The dog bears the name of "Horace Greeley." One day last week Horace went to the butcher stand, on which, as usual, he placed his ten-cent stamp. The butcher put the stamp in his drawer, and paid no attention to the dog, thinking he was uncommonly shrewd in getting the better of the animal. Horace evidently didn't understand why his goods were not forthcoming, but waited patiently, keeping a sharp eye on the young man all the while and following his every movement. After a few minutes spent in this way he began to comprehend and decided to play a little joke in return. So he coolly walked up to the bench, seized a quarter of lamb and waltzed away, with indignation and triumph depicted in every wag of his tail.

HOW TO MAKE THINGS.

This department contains each week special articles on things boys can make with the aid of a few simple tools; also instructions for making them. In addition, a correspondence column is devoted to answering questions from our readers concerning articles they wish to make, or have difficulty in making. Send in your questions. The editor of this department is an expert mechanic, and will give you valuable ideas and suggestions.

A KITE WITHOUT A TAIL.

An American genius has invented a novelty in kites, and they have already found a lively sale. The principle embodied in the tailless kite is that of the rudder.

The skeleton of the kite is made with two sticks, one upright and the other a cross stick fastened a little above the center. The rudder or fin is fastened to the lower part of the kite and extends from the end almost to the cross stick.

It is about three inches high in the center and slopes toward each end. It acts as a balance when the wind cuts around the corner, and the pressure being equal on each side of the fin the kite will fly beautifully if the wind be not too strong. The kites are from fifteen to thirty inches high, are made of brightly-hued muslin, and the string should be fastened to a little wire loop, which should be fastened to the crosspiece. A good material for the fin is cardboard.

HOW TO MAKE A HORSE HAIR WATCH CHAIN.

Select a lot of long horse hair of the color desired. Make it into a switch about the eighth of an inch thick by tying one end in a simple knot. Pick out a good, long hair and tie it around the switch close to the knotted end; then take the free end of the single hair in your right hand and pass it under the switch on one side, thus forming a loop through which the end of the hair must pass after it is brought up and over from the other side of the switch. Draw the knot tight by pulling the free end of the hair. Every time this operation is repeated a wrap and a knot is produced. The knots follow each other close together in a spiral around the switch, giving it a very pretty, ornamented appearance. When one hair is used up select another, and commence knitting with it as you did with the first, being careful to cover and conceal the short end of the first hair, and to make the knots on the second commence where the former stop. A guard made of white horse hair looks as if it might be composed of spun glass, and produces a very odd and pretty effect. A black one is very genteel in appearance.

HOW TO MAKE A WOODEN WATER TELESCOPE.

The main thing necessary is a long wooden box, a piece of glass for one end, and some paint and putty for making the seams water tight. Fix the glass in one end of the box and leave the other end open. The glass should be adjusted the way an ordinary pane of glass is set in, applying the putty on all four sides. Putty should also be inserted over the nails and along the seams of the box. With a box three feet long one can see clearly objects at the bottom of a ten-foot pond.

A TIN WATER TELESCOPE.

This is a funnel-shaped tin horn, about three or four feet long, eight to ten inches in diameter at the bottom, and broad enough at the top to admit both eyes of the observer. Sinkers should be soldered on near the bottom. This in a measure counteracts the buoyancy of the air contained in the water-tight tunnel, and helps to submerge the big end.

The inside of the funnel should be painted black, to prevent the light from being reflected upon the bright surface of the tin.

If any difficulty is found in procuring a circular piece of glass, the bottom may be made square and square glass used, and fitted into a leaden frame made for the purpose.

Any tuner can, at a moderate cost, make an instrument like the one just described.

A water telescope will add greatly to the entertainment of a boating party or picnic, furnishing a new and novel feature that will become popular wherever it is introduced.

While collecting marine animals, Dr. Holder, the naturalist, had a boat built with a glass in the hull, arranged and worked upon the same principle as a water telescope. It was of great service where the water was not too deep. While one person rowed the other watched the bottom, which Dr. Holder describes as having the appearance of a beautiful panorama passing beneath him. Fish of all colors and forms filled the intervening space,

and sometimes a "devil fish" would cross the scene, flapping its great wing-like fins as it flew rather than swam through the clear water.

THE MAGIC BARREL.

Take an ordinary barrel and paint the word "gunpowder" on it and any other appropriate lettering on it that will make your audience think that it really contains gunpowder. To make one of these trick boxes requires no special skill. It is necessary to remove one head at the top of the barrel. Then join the parts of the other head firmly together with cleats nailed upon the inside.

Heat a poker red hot and burn a hole through each stave near the bottom, then burn corresponding holes through the bottom head. Make the staves fast to the bottom by tying them with pieces of heavy twine.

Around the top of the staves of the barrel tie another piece of twine.

The next thing is to remove all the hoops, so that now all that will hold the staves together will be the twine at the top.

If that should be cut, the staves will all fall outward.

When you give your entertainment you are going to have an accomplice inside that barrel. He will crouch in it with an open penknife in his hand, and at the proper moment he will cut the string by passing the blade of his knife between two staves.

This barrel, as you may have surmised, is for use in amateur entertainments. The cask can be brought in very effectively by the use of red light and more or less mystery.

There should be a fuse attached to a little hole in the center of the barrel. The best way to proceed is to light the fuse apparently by accident. The audience is uncertain what to do, and will anxiously watch the fuse burn up toward the bung of the barrel.

When the fire reaches the barrel there is an instant of suspense. At that instant a confederate out of sight should let a board—an extension-table leaf is the best—fall to the floor.

It will make a loud, sharp noise just like an explosion and will startle every one in the room.

This is the instant when the boy inside the barrel cuts the string and the staves fall on all sides.

If this boy has a fantastic costume, on and if a red light could suddenly be thrown on him, the feelings of the audience would be quickly transformed from fright to mirth.

Don't exhibit the barrel without first trying it to see that it works properly. Also, the boy in the barrel should rehearse his part and not forget to have a sharp-bladed knife ready to cut the cord at a signal.

CORRESPONDENCE.

WILLIS, H. L.—You ask us to give you directions as to flying kites. It is unnecessary to say that a calm day is of no use, and a stormy day, with a gale blowing, is not much better. A nice bright day, with a steady, even breeze, should be fixed upon for choice. The end of a ball of string should be tied to the center of the kite in just that place most suited to the capabilities of the kite, and which will vary with every kite. To raise the kite, assistance from a friend will be required. The friend should hold the kite upward by the lower end as far from the ground as he can. Sufficient length of string being unwound from the ball, he who is about to fly the kite should, string in hand, face toward the wind, and having given the signal to let the kite go, start on a run. The kite, if properly made, and if the breeze is strong enough, will soon rise, and the run need be neither very far nor very fast, for a good kite will soon find its balance and float quite steadily in the air, slowly rising upward as more string is gradually unwound. The string should, however, be let out only gradually, and in such a way as to keep, as it were, a gentle hold of the kite. When the kite pulls let it have a little liberty, but as a good driver always feels his horse's mouth on his reins, so should the kite flyer always feel the kite on the string, and the string should not be paid out except when it is called for. A kite will not rise to an unlimited height, but by fastening one kite to the back of another, and starting the second kite as the first was started, and so on, two, three or more kites may, with a favorable wind, be sent to a very great height. To bring the kite down is an easy matter. The string that has been paid out is to be slowly wound up so as to bring the kite down gradually. Avoid any sudden jerk. The kite may thus, by careful treatment be taken safely home and be fit to fly again some other day.

JOHN L.—No, cat-tails will not grow in your yard. The ground is not damp enough. Yes, they do make a very pretty background, and here is a way you can treat them so that they will grow where you want them to: At the nearest marsh dig up a bunch of good, healthy ones and plant them in some of their native mud in a water-tight box or pail. Set the box or pail in the earth. A cover of plank, with a round hole in the center for the cat-tails to come through, should be put over the top and covered with the sod. Half an inch of water over the surface of the mud in box or pail is all that is necessary. A very unique and effective floral arrangement may be made by grouping pot plants around them.

FRANK J.—Here are directions for preserving insects which, we hope, will give you the information you want. Great care must be taken in killing insects, intended for the cabinet, and death should be produced without disfiguring them or rubbing off the down or scales that covers the bodies and wings of some specimens. A convenient and successful way to kill insects is to drop them into a wide-mouthed bottle, the bottom of which is lined with blotting paper that has been previously saturated with ether, benzine, creosote or chloroform. When a butterfly, bug, or beetle is put into a bottle prepared in this manner, and the bottle tightly corked, the insect expires without a struggle, and hence without injuring itself. From the bottle the specimens may be taken and pinned upon a mounting board, consisting of two strips of wood resting upon supports at each end, a space being left between the strips for the body of the insect. Under this space or crack a piece of cork is fastened in which to stick the point of the pin. After pinning the specimen to the mounting board, spread the wings and legs out in a natural position, and if it be a butterfly or moth, fasten its wings in position with bits of paper and pins, as shown.